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THE PRINCETON SEMINARY BULLETIN

VOLUME XX NUMBER 2 NEW SERIES 1999

OPENING CONVOCATION
A Seminary Without Walls

THOMAS W. GILLESPIE

NEUMANN LECTURE
Symbols in Reflection On God and Ourselves

RICHARD R. NIEBUHR

STONE LECTURE
Christian Political Reflection: Diognetian or Augustinian NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF

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SERMONS
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The Unreality of God ROBERT C. DYKSTRA

It Will Surely Come CLEO J. LARUE, JR.

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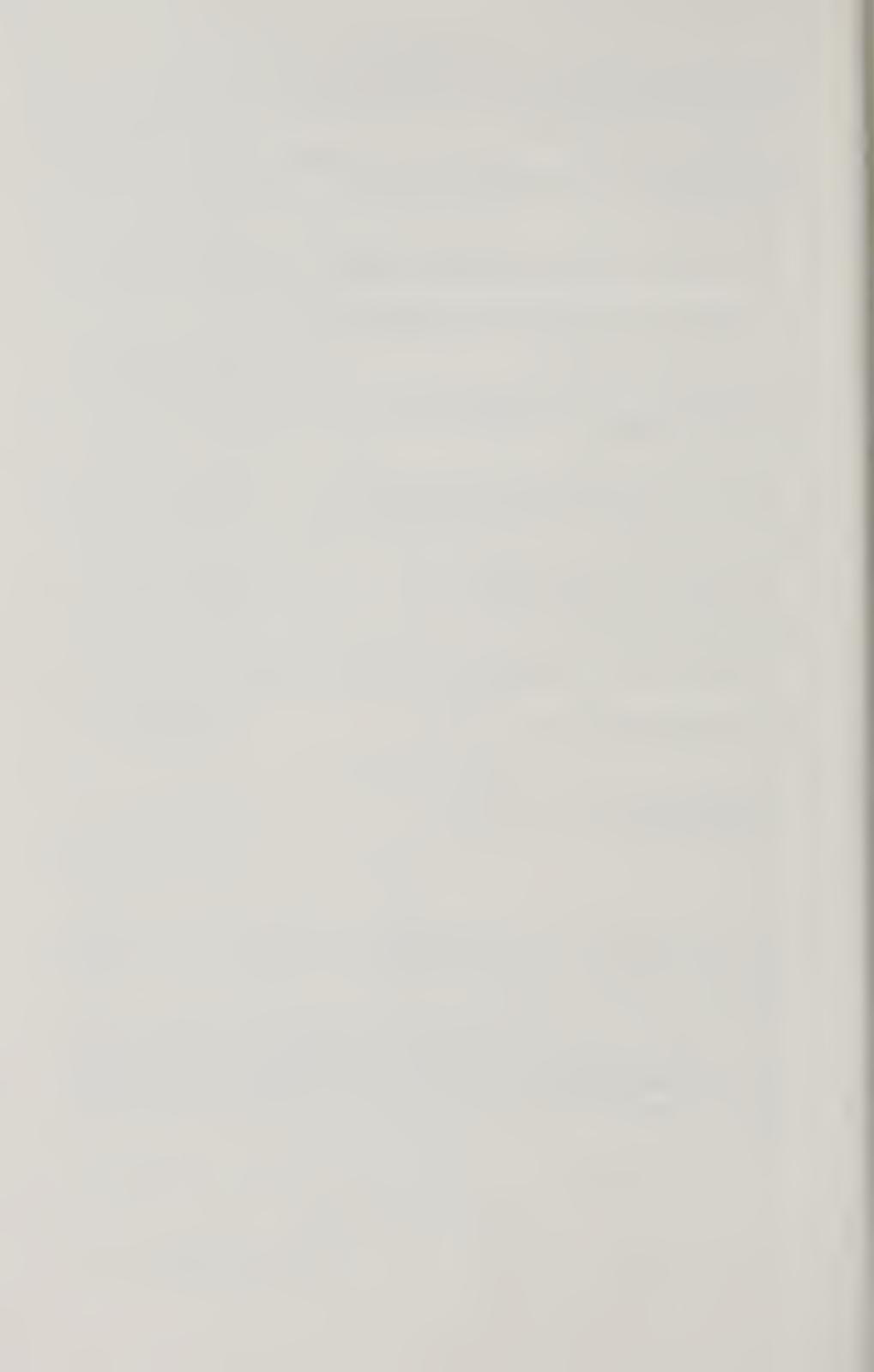
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The Princeton Seminary Bulletin is published three times annually by Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey.

Each issue is mailed free of charge to all alumni/ae and, by agreement, to various institutions. Back issues are not available.

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The *Bulletin* publishes lectures and sermons by Princeton Seminary faculty and administration, and presentations by guests on the Seminary campus. Therefore, we do not accept unsolicited material.



A Seminary Without Walls

by THOMAS W. GILLESPIE

President Thomas W. Gillespie of Princeton Theological Seminary delivered this Opening Convocation Address on September 15, 1998 in Miller Chapel.

Text: EPHESIANS 2:11-22

I.

A SEMINARY WITHOUT WALLS might suggest a theological school without a campus. No classrooms, no dormitories or student apartments, no refectory, and perhaps no library. Such was the vision of the future of colleges and universities shared with us last spring by the president of a high powered consulting firm that specializes in computer technology. The internet and the web will determine the future of higher education, he asserted, adding that already at his own alma mater—the University of Virginia—residential students attend classes and take examinations without leaving their dorm rooms. Soon, he predicted, baccalaureate and graduate degree programs will be widely available to students who will pursue them at their PCs from home. No doubt this vision of higher education in the future will be at least partially realized. There may even emerge theological schools of this kind. But this is not my topic.

The *seminary without walls* that I have in mind is an academic version of the community envisioned in the Letter to the Ephesians. It is a company of scholars without *dividing walls of hostility*. Although a seminary is a school rather than a church, it is nonetheless a school of the church and therefore committed to that quality of communal life which God through Christ makes possible in the church. 2000 years ago this possibility was attested in these words and addressed to Christians in their Jewish and Gentile differences:

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. (Eph 2:14-18)

Today, that same possibility remains attested in canonical Scripture and is addressed to all Christians in our racial, ethnic, gender, denominational, and

theological diversity. Given the continuing presence of dividing walls of hostility in today's world, it should still be heard as good news.

The morning paper and the evening news bear witness daily to human hostility based upon human difference. Among the more dramatic instances are the tribal conflict in Rwanda between Hutus and Tutsis, the ethnic wars in the Balkans between Albanians and Serbs, and the religious violence in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants. Less dramatic, but typical of most parts of the world, is the enmity that the Scots feel toward the English even today. *Braveheart* lives on. But when you visit Scotland you soon learn that the Highlanders and the Lowlanders do not care for one another. And then you discover that those from Glasgow on the west coast of the island look down upon those from Edinburgh on the east coast and vice versa. Closer to home, we face what Arthur Schlesinger has called *The Disuniting of America* over racial, ethnic, religious, and ideological differences.

But hostility toward others because of the things that distinguish us from them is not a modern phenomenon. It was well-honed by the time of the Ephesian Letter. For Judaism, the wall of hostility was of a religious type. The whole world was divided into two kinds of people, us and them, *Jews and Gentiles*. The Jews identified themselves as the chosen people of God, walled off from all others by the Law of God. The Gentiles were literally *the nations* (*ta ethnē*, in Greek), but connoting in Jewish parlance all non-Jews. These nations refused to be lumped together under a single rubric, however, and viewed one another through the lens of their own particular ethnicity. Thus, the Greeks also divided the world into us and them, but their wall of hostility was more cultural than religious. For them, there were only *Greeks and barbarians*. The latter was a term of derision they coined in mockery of the unintelligible *bar bar* sounds of those who spoke a language other than Greek. The Romans, however, played the trump card on them all. Their wall of hostility was predicated upon political power based on military might. Although Jewish religion was uniquely tolerated in Rome, and Greek culture was greatly admired, the Romans also divided their Empire into us and them, *free and slave*. Political status was, for Rome, the principle determinant of human identity and hence human value. Then, of course, there was the difference recognized in every religion, culture, and nation of the ancient world, the wall of hostility based upon gender, *male and female*, us and them one more time.

It is in such a sociohistorical context, past and present, that the possibility of a wall-less human community is announced in the Letter to the Ephesians. This community without walls, in which hostility gives way to peace, is the

product of the new humanity created by God in Jesus Christ. People are here reconciled to God through Christ and to one another in all of their created and cultural diversity. Hostility toward others is overcome when peace rules our relationship to God.

II.

Now the countercultural claim made in this text about the church as God's new humanity is not incidental to the theme of Ephesians. Markus Barth, in his commentary, designates this passage "the key and high point of the whole epistle."¹ What it unlocks and points out are the human implications of that cosmic purpose of God announced in the opening thanksgiving of the Letter:

With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (1:8b-10)

This divine eschatological plan to reconcile all things in Christ captured the theological imagination of John A. Mackay, the third president of this Seminary. In his beautiful exposition of "The Ephesian Letter and This Present Time," he called it *God's Order*. "By God's Order is meant the essential structure of spiritual reality," he explained, "which has its source in God and whose development is determined by the will of God." Further:

The Structure or "Order" thus envisaged has its center in Jesus Christ. Christ constitutes its core. The development of this structure holds the promise and sets the task of the future, not only the future of human history, but the future of cosmic history as well.²

In a word, the new humanity envisioned in the Letter to the Ephesians is part and parcel of the world's destiny, according to the revealed mystery of God's eternal purpose.

This vision is not unique to Ephesians, however. Consider the following examples from other letters in the canonical Pauline corpus:

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 2:27)

¹ Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1-3* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 275.

² John A. Mackay, *God's Order: The Ephesian Letter and This Present Time* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), ix.

For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Cor 12:13)

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call upon him. (Rom 10:11)

In that renewal [in Christ] there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all. (Col 3:11)

Each of these texts represents a condensed version of the new human community envisioned more fully in Ephesians 2. They warrant the inference that this vision is both descriptive of and prescriptive for the church created and sustained by the proclamation of the gospel.

III.

Between the canonical vision and the congregational reality there is a certain gap, as every pastor knows and every seminarian who becomes a pastor will discover. That is because the gospel is, as German theologians put it, both *Gabe und Aufgabe, gift and task*. Its grammar includes both indicative and imperative moods. What is offered by grace must be received by faith. A community without dividing walls of hostility is a God-given possibility that may and must be realized among those who confess Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Even Paul had to work at this among the churches of his time. According to John R. Donahue, that is precisely what the apostle is about in Romans 14. In a public lecture at Santa Clara University entitled, *Breaking Down the Dividing Wall of Hostility: A Biblical Mandate for the New Millennium*, Donahue argues that in Romans 14 Paul addresses the same wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile mentioned in Ephesians. Only here the division is taken up under the rubrics of *the strong and the weak* (in faith) among Christians in Rome. The *strong* are identified as gentile believers who claim freedom from religious dietary restrictions as well as the prescriptions of a liturgical calendar. The *weak* are Jewish Christians who still observe kosher meals and keep the sabbath, plus perhaps some gentile believers who previously attended the synagogue as God-fearers. What this passage illustrates, according to Donahue, are the practical difficulties in realizing the theological vision attested in Ephesians 2. The lecture concludes with a careful application of the apostle's strategic moves in dealing with the Roman situation to that of a modern Catholic university. That strategy commends neither "a bland

multiculturalism which gives superficial recognition to ‘difference’ in the hope that everyone will turn out to be like me,” he argues, nor “some bland lower common denominator identity shared by all.” Rather, the mutual acceptance urged by Paul in Romans 14 entails coexistence with significant differences “sustained by the radical new identity in Christ, and by a realization of the impartiality of a God who accepts radical differences.”³

Note well that it is our “radical new identity in Christ” that makes it possible for believers to offer each other “mutual acceptance” amid our “significant differences.” It does so not by calling us to deny or degrade the reality of our racial, ethnic, and gender particularities. On the contrary, these particularities are recognized and affirmed in Christ as gifts of God. But they are also transcended and relativized by our faith in Jesus Christ. For it is that relationship that provides us with our *root* identity. All the rest is good, but it is not God. The gospel delivers us not from our distinctions, but from an idolatrous worship of them. Worship is now directed away from ourselves to Jesus Christ. It is *in him*, then, that we have each other.

IV.

When in 1935 Dietrich Bonhoeffer became director of the Confessing Church’s seminary in the Pomeranian village of Finkenwalde, he determined to implement this understanding of community among faculty and students. Regarding this experiment in theological education, Mary Bosanquet has written that through all of the courses in theology ran three strands of inquiry:

Who is Christ? What is the nature of the Church? What is discipleship? The answers to these questions were sought not only in study and discussion, but above all in life, in endeavouring to make Finkenwalde a living cell of the Church, where Christ might be truly encountered, “existing as community.”⁴

Writing of this experience later in his devotional classic *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer declared his conviction that “Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.”⁵ This claim, he explains, entails three things:

³ John R. Donahue, S.J., *Breaking Down the Dividing Wall of Hostility: A Biblical Mandate for the New Millennium* (The Santa Clara Lectures, Vol. 4, No. 2, February 8, 1998), 11.

⁴ Mary Bosanquet, *The Life and Death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 153.

⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 21.

It means, first, that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ. It means, second, that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means, third, that in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity.⁶

Of these points, I wish to focus upon the second—the claim that Christian community is founded and formed by the fact that we who believe in Jesus Christ come to one another only through and in Jesus Christ.

Community in and through Jesus Christ is both possible and necessary because of what Christ has done for me, for you, and for us all. What brings us together and binds us together is not merely the fact that we are creatures of the same Creator, but also that we are redeemed by the same Redeemer. Writing long before our present sensitivity to gender inclusive language, Bonhoeffer explains it this way:

One is a brother to another only through Jesus Christ. I am a brother to another person through what Jesus Christ did for me and to me; the other person has become a brother to me through what Jesus Christ did for him. This fact that we are brethren only through Jesus Christ is of immeasurable significance. Not only the other person who is earnest and devout, who comes to me seeking brotherhood, must I deal with in fellowship. My brother is rather that other person who has been redeemed by Christ, delivered from his sin, and called to faith and eternal life. Not what a man is in himself as a Christian, his spirituality and piety, constitutes the basis of our community. What determines our brotherhood is what that man is by reason of Christ. Our community with one another consists solely in what Christ has done to both of us.⁷

This makes compelling sense if Jesus Christ actually is our Redeemer. What is assumed here is a full-blown, robust Christology of incarnation, atonement, and resurrection—and this in a trinitarian context. A wandering Jewish sage of the Cynic type, as advocated by the Jesus Seminar, is not capable of creating the *life together* of which Bonhoeffer speaks. A community without dividing walls of hostility arises where its members find their root identity in relationship to Jesus Christ rather than in their created and cultural differences.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 25.

V.

According to Miroslav Volf, the author of *Exclusion & Embrace* and *After Our Likeness: The Church in the Image of the Trinity*, it is the failure of Christians to find their core identity in Jesus Christ that makes the church complicit in the incredible ethnic violence of our time. Catholics car-bomb Protestant communities and Protestants firebomb Catholic homes in Northern Ireland over their religious differences. Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats commit atrocities against one another in the Balkans because of their ethnic differences. Hutus and Tutsis kill one another in Rwanda on the basis of tribal differences, even though eighty percent of the population claims church membership. Professor Volf asks, "Why are churches, the presumed agents of peace, at best impotent in the face of their people's conflicts and at worst perpetrators of the most heinous crimes?" His answer is that a "*confusion of loyalty*" grips the Christians caught in these conflicts. As he explains:

Though explicitly giving ultimate allegiance to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, many Christians in fact seem to have an overriding commitment to their respective cultures and ethnic groups. Hence in conflict situations they tend to fight on the side of their cultural group and employ faith as a weapon in [the] struggle.⁸

Now loyalty is a matter of the heart, and a *confusion of loyalties* reflects a divided self that needs healing and wholeness.

The point was made last July by Kay James, Dean of the School of Government at Regent University. The occasion was a television special billed as a "Presidential Dialogue on Race," moderated by Jim Lehrer of *The News Hour* and carried on the PBS outlet in Philadelphia, WHYY (Channel 12). Participants included, in addition to President Clinton, eight articulate Americans with African, Asian, European, Hispanic, and Native-Indian ancestry. Speaking as an African American, Dean James addressed the issue of defining *racism*. From her comments, I inferred she is a Christian. For she startled her conversation partners by declaring that racism is *sin*, and for that reason a matter of the heart. When racism takes institutional form, Dr. James explained, it is properly called *discrimination* and can be eliminated by legislation as well as good will. But racism is individual, as well as institutional,

⁸ Miroslav Volf, "The Social Meaning of Reconciliation," *Religion in Eastern Europe*, 18:3 (June 1998), 20.

and as a matter of the heart it requires human transformation as much as governmental regulation.

Thorstein Bevlyn once defined an *ism* as the absolutizing of something that is less than absolute. Idolatry does the same by treating something as God that is less than God. The human source of idolatry is the heart, which Calvin recognized as an idol factory. It produces not only *racism* but *sexism* and *ethnocentrism*, even *denominationalism* and *evangelicalism* and *liberalism* and *conservatism* and *radicalism* as well. Whatever we absolutize that is less than God we idolize, whether it be our race or our gender or our ethnicity or our church or our theology. Moreover, there is community only among those who worship the same idols. That is why we have dividing walls of hostility between ourselves and those who worship at other altars. It is also why the transformation of the human heart is the prerequisite for a community without walls.

Such transformation occurs when we look to Jesus Christ alone for our salvation, when by faith he delivers us from the need to justify our existence by the created givens of our race or the cultural achievements of our ethnicity. Remember, the struggle in the Galatian churches between Paul and the Judaizers was over the issue of ethnicity. The “works of the Law” that these Jewish Christians advocated and wished to impose upon Gentile believers—circumcision, dietary restrictions, and sabbath keeping—were precisely those things that gave Judaism its ethnic identity. Their gospel was Jesus Christ *plus* Jewish ethnicity as the way of salvation. But Paul called this no gospel at all (Gal 1:7) when compared with the message of God’s sovereign grace for all people in Jesus Christ. His Galatian answer to this theological challenge is echoed clearly in Ephesians, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast” (2:8–9).

So, if redemption in Jesus Christ is not predicated upon Jewish ethnic identity, it surely is not based on my Scottish ethnicity either—no matter how much I love the kilt, the pipes, and the haggis. And it is not dependent upon yours either, whatever it may be. Neither is it dependent upon my race or yours, my gender or yours, my denominational commitment or yours, my age or yours, my life experience or yours. Redemption is grounded solely in God’s gift of grace in Jesus Christ, and that alone is grounds for a community without dividing walls of hostility. “For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made [all] groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us” (Eph 2:14).

VI.

This school of the church is called to be a seminary without walls. Yet it is always in the process of receiving and in need of realizing God's gracious gift, as we learned to our surprise last fall. I for one am grateful to all who served on the Racial/Ethnic Sensitivity and Multi-Cultural Awareness Task Force this past spring, as well as to all who participated in the conversation by attending forums and responding to questionnaires. The Task Force Report has been not only read but studied during the summer recess, and a number of its recommendations have already been implemented. Others will follow in due season, and we will be a better institution for that.

But it is clear to me from what the Report says, as well as what it does not say, that the basic issue is more personal than institutional. I am thinking of T. S. Eliot's line to the effect that we keep trying to invent a system so perfect that no one will have to be good. No such system or organization or institution exists or will ever exist. Even the elimination of all discrimination will not relieve us from our personal responsibility for the quality of community on this campus. Our life together will be as good or as bad as we are.

In the faculty's discussion of the Task Force Report at its fall conference last week, Professor Migliore called our attention to a recent event that illustrates what Karl Barth meant by a "secular parable." It happened the night Mark McGwire hit his sixty-second home run of the season and broke the longstanding record held by Roger Maris. In the wild celebration that followed, McGwire received a bear hug at home plate from none other than Sammy Sosa, the center fielder for the opposing Chicago Cubs and himself a contender at that moment for the home-run record. What makes that hug parabolic is its power to demonstrate how differences are transcended by higher loyalties and commitments; McGwire of Irish descent, Sosa, a Dominican of African heritage whose mother tongue is Spanish. Opponents on the field and rivals for a coveted record, and yet good friends because of their mutual love for baseball. The sequel is as touching as the original. This past weekend, Sammy Sosa hit his sixty-first and sixty-second home runs and now holds the record jointly with McGwire. In an interview afterward, he shouted, "I love you, Mark, wherever you are."

Now, if baseball can do that for Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa, how much more our Lord Jesus Christ for us? In him, God has "broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us." In Jesus Christ, God has created "one new humanity in place of the two [or three or four or five], thus

making peace." Whether or not we realize this possibility depends upon our loyalty and commitment to our one Lord transcending our differences. If this God-given possibility is not realized here, at this school, which prepares leaders of the church, it is unlikely to occur in the communities of faith that we are preparing ourselves to serve. Let us live together then in such a manner that this can be a seminary without walls, an academic community of the church that claims the promise of this Ephesian text, "For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before hand to be our way of life" (2:10).

Symbols In Reflection On God and Ourselves

by RICHARD R. NIEBUHR

Richard R. Niebuhr is the Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School. He is the author of Streams of Grace: Studies of Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William James (1983). His Frederick Neumann Lecture was delivered on March 30, 1998.

IT IS A commonplace nowadays that theologians disagree, sometimes in a startling manner. These disagreements are signs of differing guiding ideas about the purposes and hence the nature of Christian theology. Some in the spirit of Moses and the prophetess Miriam theologize for the sake of promoting—and of celebrating—the liberation of captive peoples, peoples whose lives have been made bitter with heavy service in fields and in cities and in other kinds of wilderness: peoples who had become invisible to the dynasts of political and economic power and barely visible to themselves.¹ Others theologize to encourage immigrants in a new land to recognize and value themselves as representatives of all who by choice or circumstance lead liminal lives, lives between different contemporaneous cultures and their respective patterns of mores.² Still others theologize with a view to de-westernizing Christian faith as propagated by western missionaries and to cultivating new kinds of Christian life in the soil of ancient Asian and African civilizations.³ Yet others, in the tradition of Kant and the Enlightenment, theologize with a view to demystifying and dehistoricizing inherited religious language and other symbols for the sake of replacing the disappeared God of their ancestors with envisionments or constructs of ideal powers more consonant with modern or postmodern sensibilities;⁴ while, in opposition to the

¹ Among the first liberation theologians on the North American continent are the widely known authors James Cone, Mary Daly, and Rosemary Ruether. However, the series of sermons preached by Albert B. Cleage, Jr. at the Shrine of the Black Madonna in Detroit and published as *The Black Messiah* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968) deserves special mention.

² Sang Hyun Lee, an established interpreter of Jonathan Edwards, practices theology of this kind. See the article by Lee, "Called To Be Pilgrims: Toward An Asian-American Theology From the Korean Immigrant Perspective," *The Korean Immigrant in America* (Montclair, NJ: Association of Korean Christian Scholars, 1980).

³ See Masao Takenaka, *God Is Rice: Asian Culture and Christian Faith* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, The Risk Book Series, 1988); and Kazoh Kitamori, *The Pain of God*, (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1965).

⁴ Among early twentieth-century authors, John Dewey is prototypical of such theologizing; he renounces the God of religious traditions on ethical grounds and seeks to attach the word God to "the function of . . . a working union of the ideal and the actual." "Use of the words 'God' or 'divine' to convey the union of actual with ideal may protect man from a sense of isolation and from consequent despair or defiance." See *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 52–3.

latter, others theologize to foster the absorption of the language of our contemporary secular world into the language of the Bible.⁵ Many persons are keenly aware of this diversity and some of them comment on the fact in troubled voices.

To be sure, in times not long gone by, uninformed outside observers inclined toward taking theological disagreements lightly, even humorously. American economists, for example, when they refer to a difference of opinion among themselves that they regard as too abstruse to have any practical consequences, like to speak of it as a "theological difference." But we cannot read the writing of Martin Luther King, Jr. that recounts his pondering of the implications of labelling as a "boycott" the refusal of the Negro community to ride the public buses in Montgomery, Alabama in 1954–55 as being inconsequential. What was at stake for King was whether "our concern . . . [was] to put the bus company out of business [or] to put justice in business."⁶ We can scarcely call the sharp differences between the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and prominent South and North American Catholic theologians esoteric. The issues at stake affect the well-being, even the very life, of millions.

Neither are the ecclesiastical disputes reported each year over the qualifications for ordination mere shows of speculative ingenuity. Nor are the debates about heroic medical interventions for the sake of prolonging precarious human lives at their beginning or end mere displays of thoughtless emotions. Nor can we deafen ourselves to the ever more insistent question whether we do not have covenants to keep with the land, the sea, the air, and all the creatures they support and shelter.

All of these theological conflicts, and many others as well, register deeply religious, deeply social, and even cosmic distress and are at least as real as the fluctuations of stock markets and international exchange rates. They are as substantial as the human pain to which they give voice and that throbs in them.

The theological disagreements of our times trouble some because these disputes contrast so vividly with their faded or borrowed impressions of what theology was like a generation or more ago. But, in fact, theologians then as in the remoter past often polemicized against one another. Only a little reading

⁵ See George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

⁶ "[In] order to be true to one's own conscience and true to God, a righteous man has no alternative but to refuse to cooperate with an evil system. This I felt was the nature of our action. From this moment on I conceived of our movement as an act of massive non-cooperation. From then on I rarely used the word 'boycott.'" *Stride Toward Freedom*, in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 428–9.

is needful to demonstrate as much. It would be difficult indeed to find a time free of such strife. No doubt theological discord, especially in our contention-weary age, generates real distress in many of us. Certainly, the *ultimate* causes of theological dissension are difficult to distinguish. We still little understand what makes for deep religious change and have hardly advanced further than Heraclitus who said, "Nature loves to hide," meaning that the supreme law or laws governing the changes we everywhere see and feel typically elude our complete comprehension. However, the *proximate* causes of religious change and hence of theological controversy are more visible. One of them—a significant one—is that movements, social as well as natural (e.g., growing resentment of governmental authority, the warming of the earth's atmosphere) bring to light features in our own collective lives and environments that are novel. Novelties in turn affect the entire scope of the fields in which they appear, requiring venturesome interpretations of them, and venturesome interpretations of these fields of experience generate new conflicts as much in our religious life as in our scientific inquiries into the forces regulating the universe. The religions of our world appear to be not so much like changeless essences as like living streams, and we must consider whether Christianity is not one of these.⁷

Perhaps, as Karl Marx observed, religion is and has long been an opiate that dulls sensibility. What orthodox Marxist social analysis fails to notice, however, is that religion, including Christian religion, also is and has long been a stimulant to the envisagement of possibilities. While institutional creeds have an inertia of their own and tend to preserve the authority of the past, our actual beliefs do change, and changes of belief accompany changes in experience. And when experience changes, our habits of perceiving and understanding change. And changes in our habits of perceiving and understanding promote still more changes in our beliefs.

I. THEOLOGY DELINEATED

Since we can take little for granted about the character of theology today, I will begin by setting out a definition of Christian theology that has come to

⁷ On the dangers of hypostatizing Christian religion see Miguel de Unamuno, *The Agony of Christianity and Essays on Faith*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). "In Spanish, the oracular suffix *ismo* of *christianismo* . . . carries with it the suggestion that Christianity is a doctrine like Platonism . . . Cartesianism, Kantianism. . . . But this is not the fact of the matter" (14). In his now sadly neglected theological work, Coleridge remarked that Christianity "is not a Theory . . . but a *Life*. Not a *Philosophy* of Life, but a *Life* and a living Process." *Aids to Reflection, The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 9; ed. John Beer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), "Aphorisms on that which is indeed Spiritual Religion," Aphorism VII, 202.

recommend itself to me. I am conscious that possible insights the unforeseeable future may bring may prompt me to introduce changes. Hence, I offer this definition with three words of caution. First, it is not a definition at all, if "definition" means a statement purporting to distill the essence of what we are considering together. Definition of that sort is inappropriate to our subject matter, if indeed it is appropriate to any. To avoid misunderstanding, therefore, I shall call what I am offering now a *delineation*, a working sketch, of one kind of theology. It is intended to provide a general notion of the direction in which I am proceeding in this lecture and of the spiritual, intellectual, and cultural arena within which I have been struggling to think and teach for some years. Second, no delineation of theology—least of all a working sketch—can pretend to be universally applicable. Such modesty is necessary because our age is made up not of one but of many languages, not of one but of many symbol systems, incorporated into and incorporating many communities.⁸ Third, theology *is* what theology *does*, and so the usefulness of my delineation cannot appear until we see what the kind of theology I have in mind accomplishes. I ask that we keep these provisos in mind as we turn to consider the working sketch now being proposed.

In its most elementary form, the delineation of theology I offer is as follows: *Theology is reflection on God and ourselves and involves critical appraisal of our religious symbols.* I use the word reflection to indicate a kind of thinking that is indispensable to theology. We might also call it triadic thinking. It involves careful observation of what appears to us, and disinterested criticism of our habits of observation. Reflective theology proceeds neither by looking outward only nor by looking inward only, but looks inward to discern what affects us from without and looks outward to recall whence we have come, to identify our fellow sojourners, and to anticipate whither we are going. We come from various communities that our memories will not allow us wholly to forsake. We are traveling with a much greater and more complex company than we commonly acknowledge. We are going toward we know not what; it appears only dimly. I speak of religious symbols because they make up the religious "architecture" of our thoughts and of our affections, which are also thoughts. They are, that is, the chief forms that shape and dispose our thoughts and affections in this or that way toward our greatest worths, in Christian religion toward God and neighboring life. Thus, I work with an idea of theology that involves religion as well—I do not see how it can be otherwise.

⁸ I understand "symbol systems" to be not closed but open and yet constituting a whole. An epic poem is a symbol system, also a gothic cathedral, also a creed or confession of faith, etc.

II. REFLECTION

Theology is *reflection*. It is reflection on God to be sure. But for the moment we need to fix our attention on its character as reflection. To describe theology as reflection is not novel, but neither is it wholly conventional. Thomas Aquinas, for example, defined theology or “sacred doctrine” as a *theoretical science*, viz., true knowledge, founded on revelation.⁹ Calvin, on the other hand, said of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* that it was a *summa pietatis* rather than a *summa theologiae*, which expounded not theoretical but practical knowledge of God and of ourselves.¹⁰ And many if not most definitions variously emphasize the likeness of theology either to theoretical knowledge or to practical wisdom. But, in fact, these actual theologies involve more. And the “more” that they involve is *reflection*. Reflection is a process, and presumably all the books of theology we know of came into being through a reflective process; but not all of them exhibit that process. A reflective work, on the other hand, is one that makes accessible to the reader the author’s process of thinking or meditation or composition.¹¹

But we need to look more closely at what is involved in “reflection.” In its plainest natural sense, reflection is a bending back, as the rays of light obliquely falling upon the surface of a lake appear to bend back toward the observer on the shore. By transposition, mental reflection is the bending back of our thinking on its earlier course to reconsider, to reconstellate our thoughts. This happens when our thinking encounters some interruption, some opacity that blocks its forward movement. One way to make mental *reflection* still more definite is to compare it with *introspection*. Introspection is a momentary affair: in the present fleeting moment we look within ourselves. Reflection, on the other hand, requires time. It suggests a standing “outside,” as it were, and a looking back into or through an apperture, a window or door, opening onto a space from which we have just emerged. Reflection is a measuring of where we are now by turning back to see where we have been.

⁹ *Summa Theologica* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), I, Q. I, arts 1–4.

¹⁰ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), Introduction, li. and Book I, Chapter I, section 1 and footnote 1.

¹¹ For theological works that are more overtly *reflective*, I refer the reader to Kant’s *Religion Within The Limits of Reason Alone* (Chicago: Open Court, 1934), in which Kant speaks of “reflective faith”; to Schleiermacher’s first publication, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (London: Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1893); to certain writings of Kierkegaard, e.g., *Philosophical Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), *Training in Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); to Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life* (London: [s.n.], 1921); to H. Richard Niebuhr, *Faith On Earth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and, of course, to the book to which I extensively refer in this lecture, Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Aids To Reflection* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Introspection is an arresting and freezing of the inner instantaneous now. Reflection is reconnecting our present "now" to the "then" of the elapsed past, reconnecting the fugitive "here" with the "there" of the moments that have receded and become distant from us. So at critical junctures, at crossroads, we reflect on the course that has led us to where we are, on the path of our desiring thoughts. To reflect is to reappraise and recompose the melodious or dissonant music of our lives. Reflection tempers the symbols of our souls, and is thus a kind of moral action. No doubt, it is important in many kinds of thinking; it is indispensable to theological thinking. Untempered by reflection, our theologies are brittle and chalky, easily crumbled compounds of lifeless words.

It is principally with Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his once influential book *Aids to Reflection* that I shall further explore the life of reflection and mark its principal traits.

Some years before publishing *Aids to Reflection* in 1825, Coleridge had won his way to the insight that human intelligence is a "self-developement" and not a quality added to a finished substance or finished self.¹² From this insight issued the conviction, however paradoxical it may at first seem, that we are morally and religiously responsible for superintending the development of our own intellect, in the large sense of the word *intellect*: our conscience, our thinking, our imagination. No wholly external authority can relieve us of that burden. We are responsible for finishing ourselves, though this is a responsibility we prefer to overlook. The means by which we exercise our privilege and our duty of "self-superintendence" is *reflection*.

This, then, is the first important trait of reflection: It is the means by which we exercise our autonomy, but "self-superintendence" is a more suitable term than is "autonomy" for signifying the kind of freedom with which we are endowed. The freedom we exercise in reflection is not an absolute freedom but the freedom to contribute to the process of becoming ourselves.

Having in mind the general public as well as those preparing for the ministry, Coleridge wrote that "the scheme of grace" that came into being through Jesus Christ is "a faith that *looks down into* the perfect law of liberty."¹³ When referring to the "faith that looks down," Coleridge directs our attention to the Greek word, *parakupsas*, which is allied to the verb *parakuptō*, signifying both a physical "stooping down to look into"—Mary, for example, "stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the

¹² *Biographia Literaria*, 2 vols. *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 7; ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), Vol. I, Chapter XII, 286.

¹³ *Aids To Reflection*, "Introductory Aphorisms," No. XXIII, 29, hereafter cited as *AR*.

tomb" (John 21:11)—and moral reflecting or self-examination, which can bring us greater pains than walking on a bed of nails. Such moral reflection may bring into our view "the unfathomable hell within." But it is still more dangerous to walk "[as] an unreflecting Christian walks," namely, "in twilight among snares and pitfalls." Coleridge is saying that it is faith, a strength greater than our own native courage, that emboldens us to reflect, to look down into ourselves. We need to be emboldened to look within, since our naturalized fear of what we might find is much greater than our confidence in what awaits us. We flinch from the imperative, "Know thyself!" and hence we need some unimaginably kind aid. Flannery O'Connor, one of the most explicitly theological American writers of fiction in the twentieth century, once observed: "Your beliefs will be the light by which you see[;] . . . they will not be *what* you see and [beliefs are] not . . . a substitute for seeing."¹⁴ We can paraphrase O'Connor by saying that our moral beliefs direct and modulate our seeing; but what is true of moral belief and perception holds also for faith and reflection.

This, then, is the second trait of reflection: We need the assistance of belief or faith to reflect.

While speaking of the faith that looks down, Coleridge alludes to a scriptural passage, verse twenty-five of chapter one of the Epistle of James, but also to the preceding and succeeding verses. The Epistle contrasts looking at our outward faces in a mirror, which image we quickly forget in our daily business, with looking down into the perfect or fully developed law of liberty brought to birth in our hearts by the procreative word of truth, the living word that brings the hidden to light. The developed law of liberty to which the Epistle of James refers is the law of visiting orphans and widows (1:27); it is Jesus' second commandment: that we love our neighbors as we love ourselves (2:8).

What has the commandment to love our neighbors as we love ourselves to do with reflection, with knowing ourselves? There is a connection between the two, and we can formulate the connection by stating that love is the liberating law that frees us to reflect. Love can free us to reflect because it can overcome fear. Coleridge, who, as Kathleen Coburn has remarked, built "a poetry and a philosophy" out of the "swirling waters" of self-doubt and criticism, built a theology of reflection out of the same swirling waters.¹⁵ He knew well a fact that the Epistle of James does not explicitly state: the prospect

¹⁴ *Mystery and Manners*, ed. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1962), 91. Emphasis added.

¹⁵ Kathleen Coburn, *Experience into Thought: Perspectives in the Coleridge Notebooks* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 18–9.

of embarking on loving our neighbors as we love ourselves fills us with a foreboding of finding an "aching hollowness," "a dark cold speck," in our own hearts that inhibits us from loving.

The most frequent impediment to [our] turning the mind inwards upon [ourselves] is that [we] are afraid of what [we] shall find there." We ought then to look "down into" ourselves, but not with the clinically sterile method of introspection that isolates the momentary self from the stream of life in which it has its real existence. Rather, Coleridge explains (characteristically in a note), we ought to look down into ourselves "as, for instance, in the endeavor to see the reflected image of a star in the water at the bottom of a well.¹⁶

This illustration is not random, though its import may be lost on those of us who live shut up in cities. There is a light that falls on us even in the darkness of a moonless night; it is the light of the stars, though we are customarily oblivious of it, just as we are customarily oblivious of the other radiant sources of life and light surrounding us and supplying us with energy. Thus, to look down into, to reflect, is to endeavor with patience to perceive that which originates from without and beyond our apparent selves and graciously dwells in us, though its presence is often camouflaged. "That which we find within ourselves," Coleridge writes, "which is *more* than ourselves, and yet the ground of whatever is good and permanent therein, is the substance and life of all other knowledge."¹⁷ I would supplement Coleridge's comment by adding that that which is "*more* than ourselves" is also that which is genuinely potential in ourselves. But we can recognize the "*more*" as genuinely potential in ourselves only insofar as we see with faith and in faith and with love and in love.

Now we have in sight the third trait of reflection. Reflection depends on love. If we begin by faith, we continue in reflection by love.

We should pause now to take stock of what is involved in reflection. We find that the kind of reflection Coleridge enjoins on his readers turns out to be several virtually simultaneous actions of reflecting. One is the reflecting that is not only a looking down into but also looking back upon ourselves, for we can catch sight of our present selves only as they are already vanishing. A second is the action of discriminating and recognizing the larger, environing, neighboring life that selves reflect and knowingly or unknowingly incorporate. A third is a greeting of neighboring life, the "*more*" than ourselves, which paradox-

¹⁶ AR, "Introductory Aphorisms," No. XXIII, 30n*.

¹⁷ Ibid.

cally we find "within" ourselves, as well as the many others that enter into the composition, the fugue, of our being as persons. These actions of self-superintending reflection draw their motive power from faith and love, and therein lies the groundwork of our real freedom.

However, we are not yet done with examining reflection. Coleridge had still more to say that bears upon our themes. What more we learn by and in reflecting is that as selves we are syntheses of *idem et alter*, "same" and "other," "other" and "same." "Same" and "other" are, however, interdependent. The "logic" of interdependence is that there can be no I without a You, no You without an I, and no I and You without a He, She, They and Those. We can put the matter in a slightly different way by saying that selves are living syntheses of opposites; when the synthesis weakens or slackens, the self that is the synthesis subsides. Kierkegaard approached Coleridge's philosophy when he wrote that the self is a relation that relates itself to itself. But Coleridge seems to be hinting at a deeper insight. As he writes in his literary biography, "self" and "self-consciousness" are equivalent expressions.¹⁸ Moreover, in another place, he explains that *conscience* lies at the root of self-consciousness. Conscience is an act of allegiance or "Fealty" or "Fidelity"; fidelity implies the power of being unfaithful, and this "is the first and fundamental sense of Faith." Fidelity, so conceived, implies knowing "something in its relation to myself, and . . . knowing myself as acted upon by that something." Coleridge calls "that something" a "Thou." Hence, there can be no conscious *I* without a *Thou*, "without a Thou no You, without a You no *They*, no These, or Those. . ." Selves, then, are *I plus You plus They, These, and Those*. Moreover, the relations between *I* and *You* and *They* are relations not of identity but of equality. Coleridge often states that self is an act. Authentic self-consciousness is "an act of fidelity to our own Being . . . and by clear inference . . . to *Being* generally."¹⁹ Apart from the acknowledged presence of others to us and in us, we are not selves, we are not *conscious* but only *scious*; we know but do not know that we know. Today, as in Coleridge's time, we are apt to carry on much of our living as individuals who have knowledge (who are *scious*) but lack consciousness.

Reflection then is a process of discovering and actualizing our complex identity; we cannot become *one* in the sense that *persons* are *one* without also becoming manifold, without also becoming, as it were, the other life-forms that sustain us. It is a *moral* process of apprehending and striving to compre-

¹⁸ *Biographia Literaria*, Vol. I, 272–3.

¹⁹ "Essay On Faith," *Shorter Works and Fragments* 2 vols., ed. H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 834 et passim.

hend, of going forth and returning, expanding and contracting as the heart does, a process of diastolic and systolic development. Reflection is a process of "selving."²⁰ I have adapted this word "selving" from Gerard Manley Hopkins' use of "selves" as a verb. Perhaps "selving" seems an awkward neologism. But somehow we must guard against the habit of supposing that the noun "self" names things rather than acts.

To the foregoing, I must now add an important codicil. This action of diastolic-systolic selving prefigures the living process of symbolization. What we commonly call an individual person, a self or an "I," consciously relates to another self, a "You," by representing to that "You" a third; and, that third may be a "He" or "She" or "It" or a collective "They" or "Those." Martin Buber has made us familiar with the insight that there can be no "I" without a "You." But what is decisive in the present formulation is that there can be no conscious "I" without a second person and *also* a third, whether that third be a person or other kind of being, abstract, concrete, or both. The larger significance of this formulation will soon become more apparent. The immediate significance is that if we reflect with sincere care then we realize that selves are not literally *individuals*, viz., indivisible, but are microcosmic societies engaged in symbolic action or what some philosophers call *semiosis*. Semiosis, the complex action of representing and interpreting by signs and symbols, is the life of reflection, the life of consciousness. Hence, not to reflect is to fail to play one's part in the moral society of conscious life.

At this point, we have come to the virtual limits of Coleridge's mental and moral philosophy. However, we should note that Coleridge was not satisfied with ascribing to selves only a single metaphoric character. Selves indeed are social; they are volitional *acts* or *wills* comprised of a society of *idem et alter*, and as such they must be forever superintending themselves. But also, like plants, selves draw life from the environment in which they are sheltered; they are developmental or organic as well. Each metaphorical quality, social and organic, is partial; only together, in their polar opposition to each other, do they point towards what selfhood is.²¹ Selves are socially organic, organically

²⁰ "Selving" from "selves" as Gerard Manley Hopkins uses the latter: "Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:/Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;/Selves—goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,/Crying *What I do is me; for that I came.*" *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 4th ed., ed. W. H. Gardner and N. H. Mackensie (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 90.

²¹ In *The Statesman's Manual*, Coleridge writes: "But what the plant *is*, by an act not its own and unconsciously—that must thou *make* thyself to *become!* must by prayer and by a watchful and unresisting spirit, *join* at least with the preventive and assisting grace to *make* thyself. . . ." *Lay Sermons*, ed. R.J. White, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Vol. 6 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 71.

social. It is in this "organic society" of selves that we apprehend our need of trust, hope, and love and our obligation to reflect on the symbols without which we cannot think.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SYMBOL AND SYMBOLIZATION

We turn now to "symbolization." The word "symbol" is derived from the Greek noun *sumbolon* and verb *sumbalein*; the meaning of the latter is to put or cast together. In his preface to *Aids To Reflection*, Coleridge stated his wish to direct the attention of his readers—he had persons preparing for the ministry particularly in mind—to "the science of words," especially to what he calls "living words," by which he meant symbols. These "living words" or symbols are "the wheels of the intellect," carrying thought forward or into the future.

At the outset of our century, Charles Sanders Peirce, a founder of pragmatism along with William James, characterized symbols in language somewhat to the same effect. "[The] woof and warp of all thought . . . is symbols, and the life of thought . . . is the life inherent in symbols."²² While Coleridge had chiefly in mind inquiry into the human spirit, Peirce's characterization applies to all self-critical modes of inquiry. Ralph Waldo Emerson had already stated in his customary aphoristic way that "we inhabit symbols, and are symbols."²³ Again, later, in our century, Ernst Cassirer wrote in his *Essay On Man* that we should define human being not as *animal rationale* but rather *animal symbolicum*.²⁴ Susanne Langer, translator of an early short book by Cassirer, asserted the conviction that "symbolization is the essential act of mind. It is the starting point of all intellection. . . . The current of [our] experience . . . is sucked into the stream of symbols which constitutes [our] human [minds]."²⁵ "Ideation," she continued,

proceeds by a . . . potent principle, which seems to be best described as a principle of symbolization. The material furnished by the senses is constantly wrought into *symbols*, which are our elementary ideas. Some of these ideas can be combined and manipulated in the manner we call "reasoning." Others do not lend themselves to this use, but are naturally telescoped into

²² *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, 6 vols., ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), Vol. 2, 220. References to this collection are by volume number and subdivision number. Hereafter cited as *CP* with volume number in arabic numerals and subdivision number.

²³ "The Poet," *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 456.

²⁴ *An Essay On Man* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1953), 44.

dreams, or vapor off in conscious fantasy; and a vast number of them build the most typical and fundamental edifice of the human mind—religion.²⁵

But now we need not cite additional characterizations of symbol and the process of symbolization. What will help us more is to listen to a person whom we do not ordinarily count as a philosopher of mind, but whose business it most certainly was to understand the symbolizing work of the mind because she could not have her goal without such an understanding. The example I offer was executed by the extraordinary artist, Virginia Woolf, in her portrayal of everyday middle-class life in her novel *To The Lighthouse*. It involves Lily Briscoe and her companion, Mr. Banks, and Mrs. and Mr. Ramsay.

[As Lily and Mr. Banks] reached the end of the lawn . . . they turned and saw the Ramsays. So that is marriage, Lily thought, a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball. . . . For [the Ramsays] . . . were standing together watching Prue and Jasper throwing catches. And suddenly the meaning which . . . descends on people, making them symbolical, making them representative, came upon them, and made them in the dusk standing, looking, the symbols of marriage, husband and wife. Then after an instant, the symbolical outline which transcended the real figures sank down again, and they became . . . Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay watching the children throwing catches.²⁶

If we closely examine this passage while keeping in mind our topic of symbol and symbolization, then first we register that the “meaning” of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay descended upon them in Lily Briscoe’s imagination, in what Susanne Langer would have called “the stream of symbols” constituting Lily Briscoe’s mind. Second, we become aware that Lily Briscoe’s imaginative attachment of symbolical meaning to Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay creates a momentary composition, a synthesis of the particular married couple, the Ramsays, and their children, Prue and Jasper, with the general idea of marriage. Third, we realize that at the same time the Ramsays in the act of watching their children become the focal point in which the idea of marriage acquires a new weight and import for Lily Briscoe, yet the Ramsays do not dissolve into the general idea.

Lily Briscoe is conversing with herself about the general idea of marriage while she is observing Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay in the action of watching their children play. The idea has become *embodied* in the Ramsay family. As a result

²⁵ *Philosophy in a New Key*, 3rd. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 41–2.

²⁶ *To The Lighthouse* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1927), 110–1.

of this complex action of observing the Ramsays and thinking the idea of marriage, Lily Briscoe has modified, however so slightly, her idea of marriage. "So *that* is marriage, Lily thought, 'a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball.'" In one moment so fleet as not to be measurable, she thinks a familiar idea and enjoys a new idea that is continuous with her earlier idea but is also different by virtue of the specific persons and actions it is embodied in. All of this is a heavy-handed way of saying that Lily Briscoe has engaged in an act of *symbolizing*: She has engaged in an act of *representing* the Ramsays as a married couple, and she has engaged in an act of *interpreting* marriage as including this ordinary event of parents watching their children play.²⁷ The act, the event, is of so commonplace a kind that only a very acute mind such as Virginia Woolf possessed even notices it. To be sure, Lily Briscoe could just as well have turned to Mr. Banks and said the same words that she silently spoke to herself. Then Mr. Banks' idea of marriage might have been affected. The fact that Lily speaks to herself instead does not affect the vital point, which is that symbolizing is communicating to oneself or to another an idea sensibly and newly apprehended or freshly appreciated or, what amounts to the same thing, reinterpreted.

Here, then, we have a full act of interior, verbal symbolization. There are, of course, other kinds of symbolization than verbal, but at this point we need not be immediately concerned with them. I can repeat the foregoing analysis in a slightly different way. (1) We have an observer who entertains among many ideas the idea of marriage; (2) we have also the making by the observer of a fresh connection between the idea of marriage and the family group appearing before her; and, (3) we have, finally, the observer's act of newly appropriating the appearance in its connectedness to the idea, which is the interpretation. All these together make up an action of symbolization. The structure of the action is triadic. Charles Sanders Peirce was, I believe, the first to make the triadic structure of symbolization explicit. If we employ Peirce's terminology, then we should explicate the triadic structure of the particular symbolical action we are considering in the following way: We call Lilly Briscoe's idea of marriage the *object* in her symbolization, her connection of the Ramsay family with the idea of marriage a *representation* of the idea of marriage; and her exclamation, "So that is marriage, a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball," an *interpretation*.²⁸ What we are insisting on,

²⁷ For my purposes here and in much that follows, I am adopting Peirce's theory of signs in a quite general way.

²⁸ We should note that in Peirce's extensive commentary on our topic there are three further points bearing immediately on his conception of symbol that require mention now. The first is that Peirce subsumes *symbol* under the general heading of *sign*. Second, a sign

when describing the symbol as triadic, is that a genuine symbol involves thought or *meaning*.²⁹ Here we are not considering the *essence* of marriage, if essence there be. We are simply considering the action of symbolization exemplified in Virginia Woolf's novel.

My hope is that this rendering of the passage from *To The Lighthouse* will help to bring home to us several important truths. (1) The way we perceive and think our world, the way we are in and have our world and all its parts, is the way of symbolizing, the way of casting sensible forms or qualities together with ideas. That is also the way our world is in us. (2) Moreover, the action of symbolizing not only provides us with access to what we count as our world and with new features of it, but it may work a change in us as well. In the action of symbolizing, we are capable of bringing forth in ourselves an enhanced perception, a new appreciation of what we behold. We have an example of such enhanced appreciation in Lilly Briscoe's exclamation, "So that is marriage, a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball." (3) We ought not to suppose then that the action of symbolizing is always wholly *our* action. There are occasions when a perception befalls or surprises us and calls into question our habitual way of thinking. We notice something we had not previously noticed, and, if we are honest with ourselves and our fellows, we are obliged to consider whether we ought not bring forth a new, interpretative act of symbolization. I shall say more about this later. But so far we have learned that symbolization is a way of traveling into richer regions of experience, of changing, of growing, of moving or of being moved from what we had previously counted as the actual to a different and perhaps wider and deeper actual.

IV. RELIGIOUS OR FAITH SYMBOLS

In the light of our consideration of the twin acts of reflection and symbolization, we have come to recognize that we are social beings.

(and hence a symbol) may have more than one object, or a sign's several objects may be regarded as one complex object. See *CP* 2, 230–1. Hence, the Ramsays may be taken as another object, or the idea of marriage and the Ramsays may be taken as a complex object. Third, semiosis or the production of signs is, for practical purposes, an endless process.

²⁹The characterization of symbols as triadic gains its force from the contrast between triadic and dyadic relations. For example, mechanical or physical relations, such as the motion of the turbine driven by the pressure of steam, are dyadic. Behavioristic theories of language depend on the applicability of such dyads as stimulus-response, action-reaction. Peirce often describes dyads as exhibiting "brute force." See, for example, *CP* 5, 472–3. No meaning emerges within a dyadic relation. An observer of a dyadic relation may interpret it, however, and the interpretation, a free mental act, contributes what Peirce calls a third, a mental idea, and the whole now exhibits *meaning*.

Symbolization is the fundamental way in which we address ourselves, address others, address both at once, in the expectation of a responding act of symbolization, which we may also call an answering interpretation, and this answering interpretation in turn awaits still another such response. Hence, if we value consciousness, we must value fellowship with other persons, and if we value fellowship, we must value fellowship's language of symbols. But in fact we value not only this or that fellowship with other persons; we also value fellowship with person-like beings, with more than personal interlocutors that complete our existence beyond our own existence. We live in the flow of a great conversation with other mortal beings and with "*Being generally*" (Coleridge) or "*being in general*" (Jonathan Edwards) in society and in nature. Only gradually, however, do we learn to distinguish these other "voices" contributing to the great conversation. We have a need for them, as Coleridge once observed:

All minds must think by some *symbols* . . . this [fact] ingenerates [a need] . . . of Symbol. . . . I say, every generous mind . . . feels its *Half-ness*—it cannot think without a symbol—neither can it *live* without something that is to be at once its Symbol, & its *other half*.³⁰

But even so, we are likely never to learn to identify these other voices fully.

The most important of the symbols we regard as promising to supply our "other half" are the symbols we come to trust as capable of confederating us with our highest worths. These are our religious symbols. I choose the term *worth*, preferring it to *value*, because in one of its senses as a substantive it is a synonym for *dignity* (quality of being worthy; excellence) and also because it is allied to *worship* both as a substantive and a verb. In its strongest sense as a substantive *worth* is equivalent to *end*, somewhat as Jonathan Edwards meant the word, when he wrote *Concerning the End for which God Created the World*: the original, absolute, ultimate end that is not subordinate to or consequential upon any other end.³¹ Our highest worths are the worths that elicit our deepest energies, to which we entrust our own and our world's sustentation—

³⁰ *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, Vol. 3 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), No. 3325.

³¹ "See "Introduction," *Concerning the End for which God Created the World* in *Ethical Writings*, ed. Paul Ramsey, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 8 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 411–3. We may also adduce the word as it appears in Immanuel Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end." *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 96. In *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant also speaks of "an impartial reason," viz., God, who "regards persons in the world as ends-in-themselves." (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1993), 110.

and ultimate completion. It is our perpetual seeking to discriminate these sustaining and completing worths and to join our lives to them that constitutes our religion. Jesus' admonition, "Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also" (Matt 6:21), is a succinct summary of this truth, which is elementary yet so hard to learn. Sunflowers, for example, are heliotropic; they turn toward the sun and follow its motions according to an immanent law they obey but cannot know. Selves, on the other hand, are axiotropic; they turn toward and follow the worths that awaken and quicken them; but unlike heliotropes they incorporate the practical and religious laws of their lives by imagining and believing those laws or governing ideas as they become immanently present in their consciousness. In brief, selves are guided by their religious symbols.³² The most complete and complex of these religious symbols is *God*.

With this, we turn to the topic of Christian religious symbols, although I do not suppose that Christian religious symbols of themselves make up a wholly distinct genus. As to the question, "What are Christian symbols?" by now it is plain, I believe, that we can proceed toward an answer only by inquiring into what such symbols do. Previously I remarked that the function of religious symbols is to *confederate* us with our ultimate worths, and I believe that Christian religious symbols work in a generally similar way. Their purpose likewise is to *confederate* us with the worths that elicit and shape our deepest desires, the worths to which we entrust our own and our world's sustentation—and ultimate completion.³³ I employ the verb *confederate* (or *federate*) with its faint semantic nimbus of old cognates like *fides* (trust, belief, promise) and *fædus* (covenant, league) partly to intimate that in our interlocutions within the life-world in which we inhere our religious symbols cogenerate and carry varying intentionalities and intensify various feelings and attitudes, such as dependence, trust, gratitude, elation, adoration, contrition or remorse, and even bitterness. We can see how this is the case, if we call to mind the fact that a great number of religious symbols we customarily use today are symbols we have inherited, symbols that have come to us with the supply of ideas and practices we have accepted or adopted (deliberately or otherwise) from our

³² In this connection, C. S. Peirce comments: "The symbol may, with Emerson's sphynx, say to man, 'Of thine eye I am eyebeam.'" *CP* 2,302. The quotation is from Emerson's poem "The Sphynx."

³³ Some theologians, for example, Paul Tillich, characterize religious symbols as *participating* in that to which they refer. "Participate," "participation," etc., recall Plato's language of *mētērisis* with its ambiguous suggestions of causal relationships between (real) Ideas and the changeable sensible phenomena that partake of them. So, for example, Socrates says, "Beautiful things are made beautiful by beauty" (*Phaedo*, 100D). Again in the same passage he says, "Nothing else makes [a thing] beautiful but the presence or communion . . . of absolute beauty."

progenitors as well as from our contemporaries in faith. I am referring now to prayer, which is an indispensable element of religion. "Prayer is religion in act"³⁴ and so it belongs to the vital soul of Christian religion, although it is not the whole of that soul.

For example, consider these familiar prayers of petition, which subsume the common symbol *day* into addresses to God, and though the God so addressed be high and lifted up, in prayers of petition that God is also the reality of the never ending supreme quality or worth of steadfastness and faithfulness upon which the devout daily depend:

"*Give us this day our daily bread.*" (Matthew 6:11)

And:

"[G]rant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger." (*The Book of Common Prayer; Gelasian Sacramentary*)

Often we vocalize or subvocalize these petitions almost by rote. But when we are chastened, reflective, and sincere, we repeat them with a vivid sense of our frailty in a world of famine, flood, war, and rape. We utter them in trust—*in trust, with trust, from trust*. The trust we express in them is many-layered and multidirectional. (1) We trust that our prayer is heard. (2) We trust that we have truly meant what we have said, for we do not know our own hearts.

If by "abyss" we understand a great depth, is not [our] heart an abyss?³⁵

(3) We trust that we have directed our words aright or that they will be received as if they had been so directed.

A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. (Psalm 57:17)

As with our petitions, our many-faceted trust enables also our thanksgivings:

This is the day which the Lord has made;

let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we beseech thee, O Lord! (Psalm 118:24–25)

We give thee hearty thanks for the rest of the past night
and for the gift of a new day. (*The Book of Common
Prayer; Daybreak Office of the Eastern Church*)

³⁴ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 366. James purports here to be descriptive only, but in fact he has made a "spiritual" or value judgment.

³⁵ Augustine of Hippo, *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, XLI, 13. Quoted in *An Augustine Synthesis*, ed. Erich Przywara, S.J. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1936), 421.

Such many-faceted trust also enables all the other symbol-patterns our searching heart-minds cast together to lead us to glimpses of features of the divine sway encompassing us. Moreover, be the prayer petition or thanksgiving or act of contrition, it entails interpretation of ourselves and of our fellow beings to God and interpretation of God to ourselves and our fellows. Even the most interior prayer is, then, a social prayer, an appeal to "the highest possible judging companion," "the 'Great Companion,'" our "only adequate *Socius*," in whose eyes we would be accounted as worthy of membership in the ultimate society of Being.³⁶

So it is that to give thanks in prayer is to represent ourselves to God as desiring to be thankful. And the test of our symbolization of ourselves as such beings is the inculcation in ourselves of the habit of thankfulness. Our prayers are directed to God, our highest worth, our ultimate end. But a consequential end of our prayers of thanksgiving is our acquiring the habit—be it deeply ingrained or still shallow—of conducting ourselves as thankful persons. In similar fashion, our prayers entreating God to be compassionate are tested by our being compassionate to others. Our conduct, then, is the measure of our confederation with our highest worth, the God of loving-kindness. To be sure, our outwardly visible conduct is no more than a fallible sign of our innmost desires, for there is much that inhibits the visible display of our best aspirations. Nonetheless, it is a useful rule of thumb always to remind ourselves that our habitual way of conducting ourselves is the most public representation we can offer of our inner religious symbols.³⁷

We learn, then, that a many-faceted trust informs our most indispensable prayers. However, the fact that we become conscious of this many-vectored trust does not obliterate the self-knowledge we have acquired, namely, that our believing is unsteady and our symbols are fallible. Rather it sublates this knowledge; it preserves our awareness that in all our believing our thoughts depend implicitly upon our faith that future experience will justify our symbols. In saying that we have faith that future experience will justify our symbols, I mean that we trust that the future, which we of ourselves can only feebly determine, will purge our symbols of the merely private interests that

³⁶ These quoted phrases occur in William James, *Principles of Psychology*, 3 vols. *The Works of William James* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), Vol. I, 301.

³⁷ Jonathan Edwards and C.S. Peirce generally agree on this point. See Edwards on "Christian practice," in the "Twelfth Sign," in his *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, ed. John Smith, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 443ff. Edwards calls "practice" the "sign of signs." For Peirce, "habit" is the "logical interpretant" of a sign [symbol]. Again, habits [of belief], if reiterated in the outward world "have power to influence actual behavior in the outer world." *CP* 5, 474–93.

we first vested in them and right-wise³⁸ them to fit into a more general system of symbols expressing interests greater than could be ours were we alone with ourselves only. To acknowledge this much about ourselves is to acknowledge that every one of our living religious symbols, whatever else they may represent and interpret, are expressive signs of a trusting act of reasoning. Hence, our religious symbols do not constitute *truth claims*. Truth claims belong to another domain: the domain of institutions that locate their identity in their dogmas and equate their authority with their capability of defending the same. But in our more temperate and reflective moments we recognize that our religious symbols supply us with the syntax of *truth ventures*, which are ventures toward federating ourselves with our ultimate worths, ventures in cooperating with our ultimate worths to accomplish the sustentation of our world and its liberation, its salvation (*salus*) or completion. Conceived in this way, namely, as our engaging in truth ventures, we should say then that the disposition motivating our religious symbolizing is not trust only but also love, for love seeks not to bind the being of others to ourselves but to assist ourselves and all being to freedom, the freedom of being complete or whole, of being well.

Truth ventures beckon not to those who aspire to possess the final, correct representation of the “real” but to those who count it as a worthwhile contribution to bring to light *aspects* of what has hitherto remained invisible or only diffusely visible or has become long forgotten. This much, I believe, is what the way of experience teaches us, and it is not to be despised. For was not Paul speaking from experience when he wrote that now we see in a glass darkly and not yet face-to-face (1 Cor. 13:12)?

Implicit in all that I have so far said about religious symbols confederating us with our ultimate worths—but nonetheless needing to be emphasized—is the experientially attested fact that with our searching thoughts we *strive* to fashion symbols that will confederate us with our ultimate worths. In perhaps the most quoted of all his sentences, Augustine of Hippo testifies to this *striving*, this experienced *effort*, apart from which religious symbols would never come truly alive in our thoughts: “Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart is restless til it finds rest in thee.”³⁹ For Augustine was keenly aware

³⁸ “Right-wise” is Kendrick Grobel’s fine substitution for the common “justify” we read in the more familiar English translations of Romans 4:3–5. See Grobel’s translation of Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (New York: Scribner’s 1951, 1955); 1: 253n.

³⁹ St. Augustine’s *Confessions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912), Book I, Chap. I. I do not consistently follow the translation by William Watts contained in the Loeb edition.

of the dilemma endemic to religion, to worship, and, hence, to theology and states the dilemma in lines immediately following the sentence just quoted.

Grant me, Lord, to know and understand what I ought first to do, whether call upon thee, or praise thee? and which ought to be first, to know thee, or to call upon thee? But who can rightly call upon thee, that is yet ignorant of thee? for such an one may instead of thee call upon another. Or art thou rather first called upon, that thou mayest so come to be known?

The dilemma Augustine here formulates confronts all Christian theology, and much of the history of theology is the history of efforts to escape it. A good part of *Confessions* is Augustine's dialogue with God and himself turning on this dilemma. Perhaps we are rarely so scrupulous as Augustine, but we recognize the uncertainty to which he refers. Do we know what or whom we invoke if we are unsure that we have at hand symbols fit for the invocation and praise of God? Invocation and praise presuppose knowledge of *some* sort of what or whom is invoked and praised. To what extra-symbolical criterion then can we appeal when trying to decide whether our symbols are fitting for what we long to approach? The answer, I believe, is that we can proceed only step by step, day by day. Hence, in our lingering uncertainty, we understand the exclamation of the psalmist:

Thou hast said, "Seek ye my face."

My heart says to thee,

"Thy face, Lord, do I seek."

Hide not thy face from me.

(Psalm 27:8–9, RSV)

Seeking God's face may lead us to what we did not expect, or, if we are fortunate, we come to realize that it has led us to far more than we expected. In his seeking, Augustine turned to scripture—as so many before and since him have done—and especially to the allegorical interpretation of scripture. Witness his allegorical interpretation of the opening verses of Genesis in the last three books of his *Confessions*. For Augustine, allegorical interpretation was not a mechanical means of deciphering a finite code. It was rather a journey filled with anticipation into new regions of higher excitement. Even so, he acknowledged that “such is the depth of Christian Scriptures that”:

... if I were attempting to study them and nothing else, from boyhood to decrepit old age, with the utmost leisure, the most unwearied zeal, and with

talents greater than I possess, I would still be making progress in discovering their treasures.⁴⁰

Augustine's example confirms that religious symbolization is a species of peregrination. Hence, if I say that with our symbols we strive to confederate ourselves with our highest worths, I must add that we can enter upon this struggle only with trust, and in trust and hope, as pilgrims in the field of symbols must.

Earlier, I commented that we can answer the question about what religious symbols are only by inquiring into what they do. Accepting then, at least for the time being, that our religious symbols, actuated by our needs, are efforts to confederate ourselves with our ultimate worths, to confederate us with what Augustine called "the good good,"⁴¹ and with what we may also describe as being valuable in its own right, as the beautiful, we must add that they do so when we *enact* them and they *activate* us, when we incorporate them and they incorporate themselves into the tissue of our life and thought. But often our efforts are marked by irresolution, or, if we are caught up in doubt, how to proceed in our thought, whether to go this way or that. We can find ourselves fixed in hesitation. The hesitation to which I refer may be of a deliberative kind, a serene surveying of the alternative courses we recognize as being available to us. But it may also be of a different kind, one in which we must either cling to our habitual way of thinking and believing or surrender that habitual way in order to embark on a course that leads we know not where. We may characterize the first of these two states of hesitation as heuristic or instrumental doubt and the second of them as genuine doubleness of mind. It is with the latter we are here concerned, the state William James denominated with the terms "divided self" and "homo duplex." We make our exit from instrumental doubt by testing the alternative courses before us. The hesitation, the testing, and the resolution transpire within a shared worldview, a shared system of symbols. (Remember that it is by symbols that we have our life-world and that our life-world is in us.) In the case of that genuine doubleness of mind that the "divided self" experiences, the doubleness manifests itself as a clash of conflicting systems of symbols. We commonly call the resolution of the doubleness "conversion."

⁴⁰ Quoted by Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 263.

⁴¹ *The Trinity*, in *Augustine: Later Works*, ed. John Burnaby; *The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. 8 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), Book VIII, 4 (iii).

To be sure, my characterization of these two states of hesitation is a vast oversimplification, for there are innumerable intermediate states. In any case, nominal conversion, as ostensible relief from doubleness of mind, can turn out to be no more than the exchange of a state of hesitation for a rigid dogmatism. Fruitful conversion, however, conversion to a better path of life and way of salvation—whether the conversion be sudden or gradual—is not so much an abandonment of what we have been as it is a transformation of what we have been, an inclusion of it into what we are becoming.

On this point, another of Augustine's exclamations offers us help. As he later reflects upon the moment when his irresolution gave way on hearing the child's voice saying, "Take and read," and then reading the thirteenth verse of the thirteenth chapter of the Letter to the Romans,⁴² Augustine testifies:

Thou hadst shot through our hearts with thy love, and we carried about thy words as it were piercing our bowels.⁴³

These lines show how the play of redeemed imagination reorganizes and refurbishes conventional symbols with a new poignancy and lustre, so that they indirectly comment, as it were, on the very nature of religious symbolization itself. To appreciate how this is so, we need to remember that the context of this exclamation is Augustine's account of his resolve, following on his conversion, to withdraw the "service of his tongue," as a teacher of rhetoric, from the "market of loquacity," in which young students could purchase from his mouth "weapons of war" (*arma*) to implement their own violent madness. This sentence of simple paratactical structure, taken merely by itself, is already a complex system of interacting metaphors in which "God," "arrows," "words," "love," "piercing," "heart," and "bowels," endlessly resonating in each other, produce symbols layered upon symbols. The sentence also echoes multiple scriptural passages, especially in the Psalms, which associate "God," "enemies," "arrows," "tongue," "teeth," etc.⁴⁴ The larger context, the chapter as a whole, opposes mercy to mercenary dealing in weapons and opposes love to fury. As a dense system of metaphors, it is also a micro system of symbols, newly radiating in multiple directions and dimensions. In this manner, it describes Augustine's abandonment of his former practice, his former conduct, and so presents a practical symbol interpreting his change of

⁴² *Confessions*, VIII, xii.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, IX, ii.

⁴⁴ For example, Psalm 38:2, "For thine arrows stick fast in me" (AV) or "For thy arrows have sunk into me" (RSV); Psalm 57:4, "Their teeth are spears and arrows, their tongues sharp swords" (RSV); Jeremiah 9:8, "Their tongue is as an arrow shot out" (AV).

life and conduct. Augustine's conversion amounts to a profound change and so a profound *criticism* of his former symbolical world and symbolical identity.

In short, this exclamation on Augustine's part shows how symbols newly reminted in a moment or hour of exaltation may "somatize" in us what they represent and interpret and so may also dynamically, though tenuously, reconnect us to the source of our life. The source of our life is what we live from, what we live by, and what we live toward, even when we haplessly misname it.

Although much remains that we might explore, here I must end in my presentation of a working definition of theology as reflection on God and ourselves, which involves critical appraisal of our religious symbols.

Christian Political Reflection: Diognetian or Augustinian

by NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF

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I.

LATE IN HIS LIFE the great but troubled American poet, John Berryman, published a slender volume of poetry titled *Love & Fame*. The last section of the book is called “Eleven Addresses to the Lord.” Here is the eleventh of those Eleven Addresses:

Germanicus leapt upon the wild lion in Smyrna,
wishing to pass quickly from a lawless life.
The crowd shook the stadium.
The proconsul marvelled.

‘Eighty & six years have I been his servant,
and he has done me no harm.
How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?’
Polycarp, John’s pupil, facing the fire.

Make me too acceptable at the end of time
in my degree, which then Thou wilt award.
Cancer, senility, mania,
I pray I may be ready with my witness.¹

Berryman has modeled his poem closely on the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp sent by Polycarp’s church in Smyrna to the church in Philomelium.² Polycarp, a very old man, had been seized by the police and marched into the civic arena of Smyrna, where he was ordered by the proconsul to swear an oath to the genius of Caesar, revile Christ, and declare, “Away with the atheists”—that is, away with the Christians who deny the gods of the people. Instead, Polycarp, sweeping his arm around the stadium to indicate the crowd of “lawless heathen,” said, “Away with the atheists”; and then, rather than swearing to the genius of the emperor and reviling Christ, he

¹John Berryman, *Love & Fame* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970).

²The text can be found in *The Apostolic Fathers*, Vol. 2, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913).

declared, “For eighty and six years have I been his servant, and he has done me no wrong; how can I blaspheme my King (*basileus*), who has saved me?”

There is a long and thick history of people who have opposed governmental authority; many, like Polycarp and Bonhoeffer, have paid with their lives. That history of resistance and sacrifice continues into our own day. Many of these resisters have protested in the name of individual conscience: Government has ordered them to do, or desist from doing, what in good conscience they could not do or desist from doing. Solitary heroic individuals up against the crushing power of government. Others have protested in the name of some group or other: their nation, their labor union, their university.

Polycarp’s resistance was different. He would not obey the demands of the proconsul because he had a sovereign other than Caesar. To obey the proconsul’s orders would be not only to disobey but to repudiate that other sovereign. Polycarp’s action was thus thoroughly “heteronomous.” He did not declare that his individual conscience made it impossible for him to do what the proconsul was demanding that he do. He did not declare that loyalty to his group made it impossible for him to do what the proconsul was demanding that he do. He declared that he had a sovereign distinct from Caesar, namely, Christ. He would not repudiate that sovereign, for that sovereign had saved him. Hence he would not swear to the genius of Caesar; that would be treason.

Politics, at bottom, is all about authority and power to rule—authority and power to rule that is of the last resort. What we see in Polycarp is not the struggle of the individual against the demands of political authority, nor the struggle of the group against the demands of political authority. What we see in Polycarp is the struggle of two political authorities against each other, each claiming sovereignty over this frail but powerful old man, Polycarp, and each demanding that Polycarp acknowledge its authority.

Someone is hauled before a court for some infraction or other of the local laws, and announces that he refuses to obey because he has a sovereign distinct from the one who wields political authority in this area. He’ll obey a great many of the laws that the local authority has legislated. But he won’t obey all of them; his own sovereign has given him orders that are incompatible with obedience to some of them, and he won’t disobey his own sovereign. He’ll pick and choose. And certainly he won’t repudiate his own sovereign.

It’s quite a bit like that, but not entirely. It suggests that Polycarp had left the jurisdiction of his own sovereign, gone traveling, and gotten mixed up as an alien with the local authorities. It was not like that. To see in what way it

was not, we must ask, what is the jurisdiction of Christ's rule? That is, over what territory does he have sway?

Some will be tempted to say that this is an irrelevant question; Christ's authority is spiritual, it has no locale. But is that right? How do we tell what constitutes the geographical jurisdiction of a given political authority? We look to see who has the right to lay down laws in a given locale; that tells us who has jurisdiction there. In the modern world, that question almost always has a precise answer; we know exactly where the boundary between Canada and the U.S. runs. In earlier days, it was often very hazy; one jurisdiction blended indiscernibly into another.

So Christ's rule: What is the extent of its geographical jurisdiction? Does it have any, or is it a purely spiritual rule? Is there some area on the earth's surface where Christ's rule holds? If so, is there any area where it does not hold?

The answer, surely, is that Christ's rule holds sway everywhere. All areas fall within his jurisdiction. Abraham Kuyper, in a famous passage from the peroration of the speech he gave at the founding of the Free University of Amsterdam, declared that "there is not a square inch [literally, thumb's-breadth] in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not cry: 'Mine'." Exactly right, and literally so—though usually Kuyper is taken as speaking metaphorically here. Polycarp's king, Christ, had jurisdiction in Smyrna. Accordingly, Polycarp was not an alien in Smyrna; he was not in that ambiguous situation of the alien—a person traveling or dwelling in some area on the earth's surface that is not part of the jurisdiction of one's own sovereign. The king whose sovereignty Polycarp acknowledged had jurisdiction in Smyrna—which is where Polycarp was. Granted: The proconsul and the people in the stadium had a different view. They thought not Christ but Caesar was the sovereign in Smyrna. But Polycarp was willing to go to the stake for his contrary conviction that Christ was sovereign in Smyrna.

Was it then the case that, as the consequence of some strange and deep confusion, the proconsul and all the people in the stadium were aliens in Smyrna? Whereas Polycarp and his fellow Christians were citizens in Smyrna, the pagans, *mirabile dictu*, were all aliens? Since Smyrna belonged to the jurisdiction of Polycarp's king, was it the "lawless heathens" in the stadium who were aliens?

Nothing that he is reported as having said speaks to the matter, but I think we can be confident that Polycarp was of a different view. The proconsul and all the people in the stadium were subjects of his, Polycarp's, king, namely,

Christ. The difference between him and them was not that Christ was his sovereign but not theirs; the difference was that they didn't realize, or didn't acknowledge, that Christ was their sovereign, whereas he did. So, no, they were not aliens. They all lived in Smyrna, Christ had jurisdiction in Smyrna, they were all subjects of Christ; they were not aliens. With respect to Christ's sovereignty, there were not any aliens in Smyrna; for all we know, there may have been some who were aliens with respect to Caesar's sovereignty.

Rather often nowadays, Christians are described as "aliens and exiles"—"resident aliens." Here, for example, is a passage by my good friend Stanley Hauerwas, from the book he wrote with his colleague, William Willimon, *Resident Aliens*:

We believe that the designations of the church as a colony and Christians as resident aliens are not too strong for the modern American church—indeed, we believe it is the nature of the church, at any time and in any situation, to be a colony. Perhaps it sounds a bit overly dramatic to describe the actual churches you know as colonies in the middle of an alien culture. But we believe that things have changed for the church residing in America and that faithfulness to Christ demands that *we* either change or else go the way of all compromised forms of the Christian faith.³

The words suggest that Hauerwas and Willimon are of the view that America falls outside the jurisdiction of Christ's sovereignty, and that, accordingly, those whose sovereign is Christ are aliens in America.

Hauerwas and Willimon are of course echoing the passage in the First Letter of Peter where we read: "Beloved, I beseech you as resident aliens (*paroikoi*) and exiles (*parepidemoi*) . . . to maintain good conduct among the Gentiles" (2:11). In thus addressing his readers, the author is echoing the opening of his letter, where he spoke of his addressees as "elect exiles (*parepidemoi*) of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." I differ from Hauerwas and Willimon in my understanding of these phrases. The author is not suggesting to his readers that the One to whom they give their allegiance, namely Christ, does not have jurisdiction over the territories in which they happen to be living, and that, accordingly, they are resident aliens there—and would, presumably, be resident aliens everywhere else on the face of the earth as well. The import of his mode of address is rather that he is addressing his letter to Jewish Christians who were members of the Diaspora, that is, to Jews "elect" in Christ who were political

³ Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 12.

exiles from their Palestinian homeland and living as resident aliens or exiles among the Gentiles.

The description thus applies to relatively few of us. It is true of course, and must not be forgotten, that violence in our century has produced, and continues to produce, a staggering number of exiles who are living as aliens, Christians among them. For such people, the First Letter of Peter has a direct and poignant relevance. It is addressed to people like that: political exiles and aliens. But most of us live where we are citizens. We are not exiles. We are not even resident aliens. We don't carry green cards. Of course, the fact that the author was addressing a group of aliens and exiles, while most of us are not, does not mean the content of the letter is irrelevant for most of us. Far from it! Back though to the main point: The writer was most certainly not suggesting his readers were living outside the jurisdiction of Christ's sovereignty—living, thus, in alien territory.

Candor requires me to note that so distinguished a commentator on First Peter as Leonhard Goppelt interprets the words as do Hauerwas and Willimon. Without even so much as acknowledging the possibility that the words ought to be interpreted as I have suggested, he says that the address suggests that Christians "have been set apart from the nations of the world by election and live scattered among them as foreigners who have no homeland here. . . . [Christians] are living in society as 'diaspora'."⁴

The closest Goppelt comes to an argument for this interpretation, implying, as it does, that Christ's jurisdiction nowhere holds sway on the face of the earth, is his remark that "Christians are foreigners among their fellow human beings, even among relatives and acquaintances, because their existence has been established on a totally new basis. They are 'elected' or—as is said subsequently in 1:3—'born anew to a living hope through Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead'."⁵ The fact that Christians have been elected to be newly-born strikes me as woefully insufficient as an argument for the conclusion that the author of 1 Peter was not using the phrase "resident aliens and exiles" to indicate the political status of his addressees. The references to the Dispersion, to living among the Gentiles, and so forth, seem to me to point decisively in that direction. But no matter. Suppose he was not using the phrase "resident aliens and exiles" in that way, but instead using it to indicate that Christians are elect, born anew by the Spirit. The fact that Christians are elect and born anew most certainly does not imply that Christ did not have jurisdiction in Smyrna, and does not have jurisdiction in America, and that,

⁴ Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 64.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

accordingly, those whose Lord is Christ are aliens in Smyrna, in America, and everywhere else.

The New Testament passage in which Christians definitely are described as aliens here on earth in this present age, is Hebrews 11:8–10:

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Abraham “sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land.” He did so because Palestine was in fact for him, at the time, a foreign land. The promise of the land was still just that, a promise. Having said that, however, the writer then strikes the note that is so characteristic of the book of Hebrews: The people of God, wherever they happen to be living, whether within the jurisdiction of their own earthly sovereign or as aliens, look forward to a city of a different order, a city whose builder and maker is not human beings but God—thus, heavenly city. “They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (v 16). All those who live in the faith that God will bring about that heavenly city thereby acknowledge that life on earth has a sort of interim status. Their faith makes “clear that they are seeking a homeland (*patris*)” (vv 13–14), and, in that regard, they are “strangers (*xenoi*) and exiles (*parepidemoi*) on the earth.” Earth is a temporary stopping point. But from that it does not follow that Christ’s jurisdiction does not extend to this temporary stopping point; it does not follow that, as subjects of Christ, they are aliens on earth.

Polycarp was one of those who looked forward to dwelling in that heavenly city. That heavenly city would be his abiding homeland. Smyrna was not that heavenly city. With that ultimate and abiding homeland in view, the thing to say about Polycarp is that he lived in Smyrna as a sojourner—as a stranger and exile, of sorts. But that is not to gainsay the fact that Smyrna fell within Christ’s jurisdiction; and, Polycarp, as a subject of Christ, was not living in alien territory when living in Smyrna as a subject of Christ.

II.

What Polycarp’s resistance brings to light is the inherently political character of Christian existence. Christian existence doesn’t have to be *made* political—by dint of hard thought and resolute action. It *is* political, inherently so. In saying this, I do not mean that Christian worship is a political act—a sentiment one hears rather often nowadays. A *correct* sentiment, let me

add. Nor do I mean, say, that Christian prayer is a political statement—another sentiment one hears rather often nowadays, and equally true. I mean that to be a Christian is to acknowledge Christ's sovereignty.

I am well aware of the fact that a good many Christians nowadays protest the application to God and Christ of the language of rule, authority, sovereignty, lordship, kingship, monarchy, and the like. We ought to cease thinking and speaking of God thusly, so they say. Doing so reeks of patriarchalism and hierarchicalism. It invites us to think of God's relation to us on the model of a human patriarchy, with all the offensive and oppressive qualities of such a social arrangement; conversely, it encourages us to think of patriarchal social arrangements as echoes of divinity.

I am in genuine sympathy with some of the motivation for this proposal—though I am myself not aware of any actual, as opposed to idealized, social arrangement that lacks offensive and oppressive qualities. But to go along with this proposal would be to depoliticize Christianity. It would be to declare Polycarp deeply misguided—sincere, no doubt, but misguided. That I cannot do. That he is our King is far from the only thing to be said about Christ. Seldom will it be the first thing to be said; I think it is not the deepest thing to be said. Deeper for Polycarp was that Christ had saved him. But fidelity to sacred scripture requires that it be said that Christ is our sovereign.

It is important to realize that there are other ways in which the political character of Christian existence is obscured from view than by refusing to apply the language of authority to God and Christ. It is also obscured from view when the church is thought of as a voluntary organization devoted to religious activities in civil society. A group of us who are interested in religion, in particular, the Christian religion, get together and resolve to set up an organization for holding worship services and engaging in a bit of social action. We put in place some organizational structure, call a minister, place ads in the local press, welcome neighbors, and so forth. We are off and running. Everything about religion in America conspires to make one think of the church along these lines. And if one does, Polycarp is out of the question. Christ as ruler is nowhere in view. The local government may decide, for one reason or another, to clamp down on our group—it doesn't like the architectural plans, or doesn't like the fact that liquor is served to minors at communion, or doesn't like the fact that the church bell disturbs neighbors trying to catch up on sleep. More seriously: It sees Christian belief and worship as a threat to the state ideology. But if we resist, our resistance will be in the name of individual religious freedom, or group religious freedom. We will not declare loyalty to death to the King who saved us.

Christian nationalism is yet another way in which the political character of Christian existence is obscured from view. In Christian nationalism, the political character of Christian existence is diffused into the destiny of the nation. Here, it would be relevant and easy to quote passages from prominent Afrikaners in defense of Afrikaner Christian nationalism. Doing so would have the effect, however, of encouraging the tendency toward smug hypocrisy present in all of us. So let me instead cite a speech published in 1904 and titled "America as a Missionary Field," delivered by the Old Testament scholar William Rainey Harper, first president of the University of Chicago.

Rainey opens his talk by asserting that the sixty centuries of world history come in three divisions of approximately twenty centuries each. During the first twenty centuries, the great civilizing forces came from the fertile region of the lower Euphrates and the Tigris. During the subsequent twenty centuries, they came primarily from the region of Syria, and secondarily from Egypt. The great contribution of this second period was that humanity, under the providence of God and in the people of the Hebrews, arrived at "the true conception and apprehension of a personal God." The close of this period was marked by "the coming of the Son of man, the ideal Hebrew." The third period had England as its principal civilizing force. That period, Harper declared, was now coming to a close, and "another great period is just being ushered in, which promises to eclipse its predecessor even as that predecessor eclipsed those that preceded it." This fourth period will have America as its centerpiece, "what Babylonia was in the first period, what Syria was in the second, what England was in the third, all this and more America will be in the fourth. This westward movement has been synchronous with the history of the progress of civilization. And the history of civilization has been synchronous with the development of a pure and true conception of God, and of his relation to man."

In all three periods, says Harper, God has been active. We may expect the same for the coming American period. "Will there be new revelations of God in this period?" he asks. He answers: "Surely we may expect them." What, in particular, shall we expect? What "is the nature of this revelation that has not yet been clearly discerned? and toward what does it point?" Harper's answer is that "in Christ the Son we are accustomed to say, and we believe, that God the Father revealed himself. But it is also true that in him for the first time ideal man and ideal humanity were revealed; and the discovery that such a revelation was given is only gradually coming to us in these last centuries of Christian progress." And what, specifically, can we expect as the content of this revelation concerning ideal humanity? Its content will be the "idea of

individualism, of the paramount dignity of the individual." "This is the teaching of nineteen centuries of Christian civilization; in other words, of Christianity. But, now, these ideas have been demonstrated only 'piecemeal, and incoherently, in separated times and places'. However clearly they may have been taught in the new Testament, they have not yet received their perfect demonstration in human history. The question of individualism as a whole is still on trial; the real test of Christianity's success is still in the future."

The arena in which the great trial shall be conducted is America. . . . The history of the church during these centuries is sufficient evidence of this proposition. Here in this great country, provided by God himself with all the facilities needed, preserved in large measure by God himself from the burdens and trammels of dead institutions and deadly traditions, the consummation of Christian life and thought will be realized. . . . [O]f all that is coming, America, broadly speaking, will be the scene of action. . . .

Christianity's contribution to the world is a single thing, and a simple thing: to teach the meaning of love; for this includes God and humanity, each in its relation to the other. The message has been received, but the lesson has not been learned. Mankind still lingers in the kindergarten. . . . The Great Teacher is patient; no one knows better than himself the importance of fundamental training. Centuries will pass; and gradually humanity will come to recognize the significance of love; gradually Jesus the Christ will come to reign in the hearts of men. In this work of educating humanity to understand God and itself, America is the training-school for teachers.⁶

Need I say that no Polycarp will emerge from Christian nationalism such as this!

⁶ William Rainey Harper, *Religion and the Higher Life: Talks to Students* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1904), 178–9 and 183–4. The other citations are taken from 173–7. A similar blending is to be found in another essay in the same collection, "Loyalty to Self." Harper opens by declaring, "These are days in which men's minds and hearts are filled with the thought of loyalty—loyalty to country." Shortly he declares, "But these are days, too, in which men's minds are filled with another thought of loyalty—loyalty to God." He then asks: "With love of country thus incited by the things we see and hear on every side, with love of God quickened by what we see, what was not seen before, . . . we ask ourselves the question: . . . How may one reach this high plane of true loyalty to country and to God?" "The answer," he says, "is this: In order to be loyal to country and to God, first of all be loyal to yourself."

III.

The proconsul who consigned Polycarp to the flames was Statius Quadratus. He had political jurisdiction over Smyrna—under Caesar, of course. And Polycarp was a citizen of Smyrna—or at least of the region. He was not a citizen of some other natural jurisdiction living as an exile in Smyrna. Thus, Statius Quadratus was Polycarp's sovereign. Polycarp had not resigned his citizenship and repudiated Statius Quadratus as his sovereign. He did indeed refuse to obey the proconsul's order to blaspheme Christ; he paid for that refusal with his life. But he did not, so far as we know, repudiate Statius Quadratus as his sovereign.

As I mentioned before, though some of those in the contemporary world who confess the sovereignty of Christ are political aliens or exiles, most are not. I am not. Not only do I live in the U.S., I carry a U.S. passport. I do not carry a green card. In a good many recent discussions, the language of “resident aliens and exiles” conceals and obscures this reality from view; a distorted understanding of the Christian’s location in the space of politics inevitably follows. A dash of cold realism is in order here. Almost all of us who are Christians in the modern world carry passports; most of us live where we are citizens. Our reflections on politics must neither overlook this, nor carry the suggestion that it is not true. I feel confident in saying that Hauerwas and Willimon carry U.S. passports. They are not resident aliens. They do not carry green cards.

Polycarp had two sovereigns, Christ and Statius Quadratus. Some people in the contemporary world carry two passports. They are citizens of two polities; they have two sovereigns. That is similar, but also different. What is different is that the jurisdictions of those two sovereigns are distinct. Smyrna, by contrast, fell within both jurisdictions: within Christ’s jurisdiction, and within Statius Quadratus’ jurisdiction. Highly paradoxical!

The paradox was never more beautifully, precisely, and pungently expressed than in another document that comes to us from apostolic times, namely, the *Epistle to Diognetus*:

For the distinction between Christians and other men, is neither in country nor language nor customs. For they do not dwell in cities in some place of their own, nor do they use any strange variety of dialect, nor practise an extraordinary kind of life. . . . Yet while living in Greek and barbarian cities, according as each obtained his lot, and following the local customs, both in clothing and food and in the rest of life, they show forth

the wonderful and confessedly strange character of the constitution of their own citizenship. They dwell in their own fatherlands, but as if sojourners in them; they share all things as citizens, and suffer all things as strangers. Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is a foreign country. They marry as all men, they bear children, but they do not expose their offspring. . . . They pass their time upon the earth, but they have their citizenship in heaven. They obey the appointed laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives.

Polycarp, being a citizen of Smyrna, shared all things with his fellow citizens. Yet he lived there “as if” he were an alien—as if we were a foreigner, a *xenos*. For he also carried, as we have seen, another citizenship.⁷

Consider someone who carries, say, both a Dutch and an American passport. Though he shares everything with the local citizens when in the U.S., it is also true that he is an alien there, because he is a Dutch citizen. It is not *as if* he is an alien; with regard to his Dutch citizenship, he *is* an alien. Conversely, when he is in the Netherlands, though he then shares everything with those local citizens, it is also true that he is an alien there, because he is an American citizen. In both the United States and the Netherlands, he is both citizen and alien. Literally. Citizen with respect to one polity, alien with respect to the other.

Polycarp’s situation was something like that, but not entirely. For whereas there is no area on the globe that falls within the jurisdiction of both the U.S. and the Netherlands (with the complicated exception of embassies and consulates), Smyrna fell within the jurisdiction of both Christ and Statius Quadratus. So we can’t say that Polycarp was both citizen and alien in Smyrna: citizen with respect to one sovereignty, or polity, alien with respect to the other. Literally speaking, he was not an alien there *in any respect*. We have to say something like what the writer of the *Epistle to Diognetus* does say; namely, that Polycarp lives in Smyrna as a citizen thereof, but also *as if* an alien. *As if* an alien; in no regard is he really an alien in Smyrna—except in the sense, recall, that his true city is the heavenly city which is yet to come. The situation, literally, is that Polycarp has dual sovereigns, possesses dual citizenship, and lives within the jurisdiction of both sovereigns. Exceedingly paradoxical!

And more paradoxical yet. For not only do these sovereignties overlap in their geographical jurisdiction. They overlap as well in what one might call

⁷ I am taking “as if” as better capturing the meaning of the Greek here than just “as.” At one point in the passage, Kirsopp Lake translates with “as,” at another point, with “as if.”

their “scope” jurisdiction. One sovereign was ordering Polycarp to swear to the genius of Caesar; the other was ordering Polycarp not to swear to the genius of Caesar. There’s a long tradition which understands the duality of church and state on the model of priest and king: the church deals with religious matters, the state with secular matters. Polycarp and his fellow martyrs are witnesses to the fact that over and over the jurisdiction of the two sovereigns overlaps in scope. That is no accident; the church has things to say about affairs of state—for its *sovereign* has things to say about affairs of state.

IV.

The duality around which Augustine organized much of his late thought, and which has influenced vast stretches of Christian thought ever since, was a different duality. Not *just* different, though; Augustine’s particular way of articulating his duality has served to obscure from view the Christian’s duality of citizenship to which the letter to Diognetus points. The Augustinian duality I have in mind is, of course, the duality of *civitas dei* and *civitas mundi*.⁸

“Two loves have created . . . two cities,” says Augustine,

namely, self-love to the extent of despising God, the earthly; love of God to the extent of despising one’s self, the heavenly city. The former glories in itself, the latter in God. For the former seeks the glory of men while to the latter God as the testimony of the conscience is the greatest glory. . . . The former dominated by the lust of sovereignty boasts of its princes or of the nations which it may bring under subjection; in the latter men serve one another in charity, the rulers by their counsel, the subjects by their obedience. (*de Civitate Dei* XIV, 28)

These two kinds of love distinguish the two cities established in the human race, . . . in the so to speak commingling of which the ages are passed. (*de Genesi at litteram libri duodecim*, XV, 20)

Let us, for the moment, take what Augustine calls “the city of God” to be the church. A clear indication that Augustine’s duality is not to be identified with the duality to which I have pointed is that whereas the Christian belongs to only one of the elements of Augustine’s duality, namely, the *civitas dei*, the Christian belongs to *both* of the elements of the duality to which I have pointed: a citizen of *both* God’s holy commonwealth and of some natural commonwealth. That difference is connected with the fact that the membership of Augustine’s *civitas mundi* is not to be identified with any particular

⁸ My citations from Augustine will all be taken from Erich Przywara, S.J., *An Augustine Synthesis* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1936), xiv, 28; xv, 20.

natural citizenry nor with all of them together—since by now every natural citizenry has members of the *civitas dei* among its own members, though without those ever constituting the totality of its members.

It would be fortunate if we could leave it there: a different distinction from that to which I have pointed. But as I indicated above, we cannot. For in his discussion of the commingling of these two cities, Augustine regularly says such things as this:

We see now a citizen of Jerusalem, a citizen of the Kingdom of heaven, holding some office upon earth; as for example, wearing the purple, serving as magistrate, as aedile, as proconsul, as Emperor, directing the earthly republic, but he hath his heart above if he is a Christian, if he is of the faithful, if he despiseth those things wherein he is and trusteth in that wherein he is not yet. . . . Let us not therefore despair of the citizens of the Kingdom of heaven when we see them engaged in the affairs of Babylon, doing something terrestrial in a terrestrial republic; nor again let us forthwith congratulate all men whom we see engaged in celestial matters, for even the sons of the pestilence sit sometimes in the seat of Moses. (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*, LI, 6)

A member of the city of God who is not only a citizen of the empire but occupies an official position therein: as such, no problem. The problem arises when Augustine proceeds to say that the affairs of empire are “the affairs of Babylon”—“Babylon” being, for Augustine, an alternative name for the *civitas mundi*. The affairs of the empire are the affairs of the *civitas mundi*. As he says in another place, “Two loves make up these two cities: love of God maketh Jerusalem, love of the world maketh Babylon” (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*, LXIV, 2). But if the affairs of empire are the affairs of the *civitas mundi*, how can a citizen of Jerusalem, who has “his heart above,” possibly be engaged in such affairs? How can he, whose citizenship is not in Babylon but Jerusalem, participate in the affairs of secular government?

Probably, Augustine was thinking of the empire not as identical with the *civitas mundi* but as the *polity* of the *civitas mundi*. If so, then his thought was that under one and another form of duress Christians may find themselves in the compromised situation of engaging in the institutional affairs of empire. “The terrestrial kingdom,” says Augustine, “does in some manner exact service from the citizens of the kingdom of heaven” (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* LI, 4). When the Christian, under duress, does engage in the institutional affairs of empire, he will despise them while engaging in them, for they are the affairs of the polity of the *civitas mundi*. Perhaps Augustine’s thought about

natural *citizenship* went along the same lines as his thought about working in government. Given that the imperial polity is the polity of the *civitas mundi*, the Christian can in good conscience retain the status of citizen therein only if compelled to do so.

Augustine's thought about the church went along parallel lines. He remarks that members of the earthly city are on occasion to be found engaging in the affairs of the celestial city. To make sense of this, we must go beyond what he explicitly says to make a distinction parallel to that made above between *civitas mundi* and empire. We must distinguish between that people which is the *civitas dei*, on the one hand, and the institutional church, on the other hand; the institutional church is the *polity* of the *civitas dei*. The thing to be said then is that there are people engaged in the affairs of the institutional church, that is, in the polity of the *civitas dei*, who are not members of the *civitas dei*—aliens working within the institutional structure. In one passage, Augustine suggests that sometimes, at least, they are doing so under a form of duress not unlike that which forces Christians to work in governmental posts;⁹ more commonly, his thought is that they are doing so for personal advantage.¹⁰

I submit that this way of thinking—thinking of government as the polity of the *civitas mundi* and of the institutional church as the polity of the *civitas dei*—is mistaken on a crucial point, and that this mistake will unavoidably obscure from view the duality of citizenship to which I have pointed. Either that, or it will view such duality as compromise. The thought is that the person who is not of two loves but one, the love of God, will voluntarily have but one citizenship: namely, citizenship in the commonwealth of God. Such a person may be forced to take up citizenship in some earthly polity as well—may even be forced to serve in government; but if he had his way, he would never be anything other than a resident alien within all such polities, for they are the polities of the *civitas mundi*.

My objection to this line of thought is that the state is not in fact the polity

⁹ The full passage goes like this: “There is today, in this age, a terrestrial kingdom where dwells also the celestial kingdom. Each kingdom—the terrestrial kingdom and the celestial, the kingdom to be rooted up and that to be planted for eternity—has its various citizens. Only in this world the citizens of each kingdom are mingled; the body of the terrestrial kingdom and the body of the celestial kingdom are commingled. The celestial kingdom groans amid the citizens of the terrestrial kingdom, and sometimes (for this too must not be hushed) the terrestrial kingdom doth in some manner exact service from the citizens of the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of heaven does exact service from the citizens of the terrestrial kingdom” (*Enarrationes in Psalmos LI*, 4).

¹⁰ “There are some who hold pastoral chairs that they may shepherd the flock of Christ, others fill them that they may enjoy the temporal honours and secular advantages of their office. It must needs happen that these two kinds of pastors, some dying, other succeeding them, should continue in the Catholic Church to the end of time and the judgment of the Lord” (*Epistolae CCV*, iii, 2, 3).

of the *civitas mundi*—not after the spread of the church throughout the world. The state is the polity of the *civitas gentis*, not of the *civitas mundi*. Together, Christian and non-Christian, Jew and Gentile, we are citizens of the state. Unlike the *civitas dei*, the *civitas mundi* has no polity of its own. The state belongs to the structures of our common humanity.

Compared with the Diognetian description of Christians as willingly sharing all things as citizens while yet suffering all things *as if* aliens, the Augustinian line of thought neglects the fact that Christians voluntarily and rightly enjoy the rights and duties of natural citizenship—assumes, in fact, that they ought not to do so—and focuses entirely on the point that within all governmental jurisdictions they are *as if* aliens. The paradox, on which the *Epistle to Diognetus* so accurately puts its finger, is obscured from view: the paradox, namely, that the Christian is a citizen of Christ's kingdom and also a citizen, voluntarily and by conviction, of some natural political order belonging to the *civitas gentis*, and that the jurisdictions of the sovereigns of these two citizenries overlap.

V.

The *Epistle to Diognetus* does not only say of Christians that “they share all things as citizens and suffer all things as if strangers.” It also says that “they dwell in their own fatherlands, but as if sojourners in them.” This follows the statement that “they do not dwell in cities in some place of their own, nor do they use any strange variety of dialect, nor practise an extraordinary kind of life.” Instead, they follow “the local customs, both in clothing and food and in the rest of life”—while nonetheless showing forth “the wonderful and confessedly strange character” of their identity.

This strikes a different, non-political, note. For peoples are not citizenries, not as such, anyway; and, being a member of some nation is distinct from being a citizen of some polity. One of the ideals born of German Romantic nationalism was that each nation should have its own state, and each state should be the polity of just one nation. In our contemporary world, it never happens that way. States and nations are not only conceptually distinct; they never even coincide. Members of a single nation are regularly citizens of distinct states; and, citizens of a single state are regularly members of distinct peoples. The writer of the *Epistle to Diognetus* invites us then to take a step beyond the step we have already taken. In our earlier comments, it was his reference to citizenship—*politeia*—that caught our attention. Now, it will be his allusion to nationality and peoplehood.

Consider once more the First Letter of Peter. The writer says to his

addressees that they are “a chosen race (*genos*),” “a holy nation (*ethnos*),” “God’s own people (*laos*).” “Once you were no people,” he adds, “but now you are God’s people.” I think there can be no doubt that what the writer has in mind is not that his addressees *by themselves* are a holy people, but that they *represent* a holy people. Moreover, the holy people in question are not *Christian Jews in the diaspora*, but *the church*. The church is the holy nation, or people, that he has in mind. And I dare say we ought to hear something, at least, of the note of prescription or injunction in his words, not merely the note of description. In part, he is *describing* the church as a people; in part, he is *urging the church to become* a people. It’s like an Afrikaner leader, early in the formation of Afrikaner consciousness, saying to his audience of Afrikaners, “You are a people.”

How literally are we to understand the writer when he speaks of the church as a “nation” and a “people”? Well, of all the different sorts of natural groupings of human beings, the church is at least as much like a people, or nation, as it is like any other. Nations, for one thing, are not voluntary associations. It’s true that individuals, by acts of volition, can bring it about that they become members of nations. But the nation itself, rather than being a voluntary association, is something that comes about in the course of history; and, its members, for the most part, have not chosen their nation but were born into it. Likewise, a nation is a self-identifying grouping. If the Poles are a people, then *being a Pole* is not a category introduced by theorists, such as sociologists or anthropologists, but a category that the Poles themselves use. They *identify* themselves as Poles—which is to say that *being Polish* enters more or less deeply into the narrative identity of those who are Poles. That identity is manifested in culture; distinctness of nations gets expressed in distinctness of culture. Lastly, it is typical of nations that members feel *loyalty* to the nation. They may admire and envy other nations, but it is to their own nation they feel that particularist emotion that is loyalty.¹¹ In all these respects the church is like a people. Where the church most strikingly differs is that, unlike almost all other peoples, she has no fatherland, no motherland—no homeland. She *awaits* a homeland.

But while the Christian, as member of the church, is thereby member of a people, the Christian is almost always of another nationality as well. She is a member of some natural nation, and participates, with greater or lesser intensity, in the life of that nation. She speaks the language of her people,

¹¹ I have a much more ample discussion of nations (along with a discussion of nationalism) in my *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983). See esp. chapter 5: “Nation against Nation.”

wears the clothes, eats the food, memorizes the national poetry, sings the national anthems, weeps over the massacres, rejoices over the victories, visits the shrines. She thereby reveals that, in addition to being a Christian, she is a Basque, a Palestinian, a Frisian, a Dane, a Latvian, an Australian aboriginal, an Inuit, or whatever. (I have been told that the Zuñi religion remains so tightly interwoven with Zuñi national identity that it is impossible for Christian converts among the Zuñis to remain in the Zuñi community. If so, that constitutes an exception to what, over these two thousand years in the history of Christianity, has been the rule.)

This, so far, is descriptive. Christians are not only members of that people that is the church; almost all of them are also members of some natural nation. It is right that it be thus, so I believe—though here I must forego defending that conviction. What is worth observing is that Augustine was as negative toward dual nationality on the part of the Christian as he was toward dual citizenship. The Christian, if she lives as she ought, will have but one national identity, that of the people of God. Consider what Augustine says in *Of True Religion*:

Man is not to be loved by man . . . as brothers after the flesh are loved, or sons, or wives, or kinsfolk, or relatives, or fellow citizens. For such love is temporal. We should have no such connections as are contingent upon birth and death, if our nature had remained in obedience to the commandments of God and in the likeness of his image. . . . Accordingly, the Truth himself calls us back to our original and perfect state, bids us resist carnal custom, and teaches that no one is fit for the kingdom of God unless he hates these carnal relationships. Let no one think that is inhuman. It is more inhuman to love a man because he is your son and not because he is a man, that is, not to love that in him which belongs to God, but to love that which belongs to yourself. . . . If we are ablaze with love for eternity we shall hate temporal relationships. Let a man love his neighbour as himself. No one is his own father or son or kinsman or anything of the kind, but is simply a man. Whoever loves another as himself ought to love that in him which is his real self. Our real selves are not bodies. . . . Human nature is to be loved . . . without any condition of carnal relationship. (*de vere religione*, xlvi, ¶¶88–89)¹²

Compared with the description of Christians, in the *Epistle to Diognetus*, as dwelling in their own fatherlands but as if sojourners there, this Augustinian

¹² Translation from *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, ed. J.S. Burleigh (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953).

line of thought neglects entirely the point that Christians do have fatherlands in which they dwell—or rather, it assumes that they ought not to have them—and focuses entirely on the point that wherever they dwell, they are as if sojourners.

VI.

I have not presented my reasons for making the points I have made; I have simply set them forth. In conclusion, let me explain. It may well be that Christians have something to say about the debate now going on between liberals and communitarians. No doubt Christians have something to say about the debate between pacifists and just-war theorists. And Christians, in my view, do have something to say about the debate going on over the provision by government of welfare to the poor. In short, there is such a thing as a Christian voice on political issues. Or better, there are Christian *voices* on political issues. To be a Christian is not to share a *consensus* on political issues but to participate in, and to care about the outcome of, ongoing *debates* within the Christian community on such issues.

But more fundamental within Christian existence than the fact that there are Christian *voices* on political and national issues is the fact that the Christian occupies a unique *location* in the space of politics and nationality: citizen of the church but also citizen of some natural polity; member of the people of God but also member of some natural nation. The first and fundamental issue facing the Christian who reflects on politics and nations is what to make of this perplexing double duality. How are we to understand the fact that Polycarp lived as a citizen under and within the jurisdiction of both Caesar and Christ? How are we to understand the fact that you and I are members both of some natural people and of that other people which is the church? How, in short, are we to understand that perplexing double duality on which the writer of the *Epistle to Diognetus* put his finger?

This, I say, is the first and fundamental question. Before we adopt positions in the debates concerning the best organization and most appropriate policies of the natural political order, before we develop a Christian voice on such issues, we have to try to understand how our citizenship in the church is related to our citizenship in one or another of those natural political orders—and how our living under the sovereignty of Christ is related to our living under the sovereignty of some natural political order. On issues of the former sort, the Christian often participates with others in the debates. On issues of the latter sort, the debates are among Christians. For the paradoxical

location in the space of polity and nationality occupied by Christians is unique to them. The closest analogue is the sociopolitical location of Jews.¹³

We must be faithful, in our Diognetian reflections on location, to the blood of Polycarp, the blood of Bonhoeffer, and the blood of all those other martyrs, remembered and forgotten, who died at the hands of rulers for refusing to blaspheme the King who saved them. In our reflections we must likewise be faithful to the prayers the church offers for the ruling authorities, prayers both of intercession and of thanksgiving. Prayers for Constantine and Lincoln offered—not to Constantine and Lincoln—but to a ruler who is *other* than those, namely, Christ, the King of the church.

The prayers must be remembered along with the martyrs. Not only Polycarp but Constantine, not only Bonhoeffer but Lincoln. To remember only the political martyrs of the church and to forget her prayers for good rulers is to forget or ignore the fact that sometimes the church must say “Yes” to the rulers—if she is to be faithful in her witness to the King who saved us. To remember only the church’s prayers of thanksgiving for good rulers and to forget the martyrs is to forget or ignore the fact that sometimes the church must say “No” to the rulers—if she is to be faithful in her witness to the King who saved us. Diognetian reflections on politics require holding in view both the “No” and the “Yes” the church pronounces on the governance of our earthly rulers.”

¹³ This order of reflection—first location, then issues—is also the order in Karl Barth’s well-known essay, “The Christian Community and the Civil Community,” in Karl Barth, *Community, State and Church: Three Essays* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1968).

Origins: The Evolution of Praise

by BARBARA BROWN TAYLOR

Barbara Brown Taylor, the Butman Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Piedmont College, delivered this address on October 19, 1998, as part of the Macleod/Short Hills Community Congregational Church Preaching Lecture Series. Her many books include When God is Silent (1998).

NO ONE I know was very interested in science until the publication of Stephen Hawking's book, *A Brief History of Time*, in 1988. There were certainly other books about science written for popular audiences before that—most notably, Gary Zukav's book *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, published in 1979—but while Zukav's book remained something of a cult classic among the readers I knew, Hawking's book soon showed up on coffee tables all over town. According to my informal survey, many more people bought the book than ever actually read it, but what struck me was the enormous interest it provoked.

Maybe it was the author himself who captured people's imaginations—tiny Stephen Hawking propped in a wheelchair, his fragile body wasted by Lou Gehrig's disease, while his robust mind roamed the stars—but I think it was more than that. I think it was also his quest for a “theory of everything” that caught people's attention. Even those of us who did not have a clue what that meant found ourselves drawn to the idea. Would it not be wonderful to understand everything? More to the point, would it not be wonderful to discover the unity at the heart of all diversity—a theory that would tie everything together instead of driving things farther and farther apart?

“If we do discover a complete theory,” Hawking wrote in the final paragraph of his book,

it should in time be understandable in broad principle by everyone, not just a few scientists. Then we shall all, philosophers, scientists, and just ordinary people, be able to take part in the discussion of why it is that we and the universe exist. If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason—for then we would truly know the mind of God.¹

Some of you, I know, do not need a complete theory of anything to tell you why we and the universe exist. You are believers in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You are believers in the Word made flesh, and you do not require any explanation beyond what scripture already provides: that both we

¹ Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam, 1988), 175.

and the universe are here because it has pleased God to create us. The ultimate triumph of human reason does not concern you nearly as much as the ultimate triumph of human faith, and on the whole you view science as antagonistic to faith.

I know what you mean. Every time I see one of those articles titled, "Science Explains the Mysteries of the Bible," I think, "Why don't you mind your own business? Go back to the laboratory where you belong and leave the Bible alone." At the same time, I am aware of what this division between science and religion has done to me personally and to the whole culture in which I live, including the church.

Simply put, it leads us to live divided lives. On one side of the divide is the body, which depends on science for everything from medicine to e-mail. On the other side is the soul, which depends entirely on God. On one side of the divide is reason, which wants to know how gravity works and why plants grow. On the other side is faith, which will never find answers to all its questions. On one side of the divide is the material world, which operates according to discernible laws of physics. On the other side is the spiritual world, which is governed by the inscrutable will of God.

Plenty of people are willing to live with one foot on each side of this divide, but I am not one of them. I want a theory of everything. I want to live an undivided life, chiefly because I believe in an undivided God. If God is the origin of all that is—earth, moon, and stars, as well as spirit, soul, and consciousness, then how can science (which tells me the truth about physical reality) and religion (which tells me the truth about spiritual reality) be enemies? And why should living my life require me to use two different operating manuals? If God is truly one and truly God of all, then truth cannot be divided. If all things find their essential unity in Christ, then all divisions are illusion. They are products of our own limited understanding.

I do not expect the breach between religion and science to be closed in my lifetime. Their methods, their interests, and their ways of knowing things are too different for that. Any "happy" marriage between the two would require one or the other to shut up, but I do believe that dialogue is possible, and enmity unnecessary. I am also deeply concerned about people who are leaving the church because they are no longer willing to choose between reason and faith.

I do not think they are leaving because they lack faith. I think many of them are leaving because their sense of reality is deeper and more complex than many churches will acknowledge. I think they are leaving because they have discovered their questions are not welcome in church and that the answers

they receive there are far too facile. I think they are leaving because they are longing for unity—between spirit and matter, between Sunday and Monday, between scripture and science—that the church is not helping them find. Sometimes I even think they are leaving because the Holy Spirit is leading them away from the temple toward a new day of Pentecost, so the church can begin all over again.

Meanwhile, we are living in an exciting time, when the five-hundred-year-old cold war between religion and science has begun to thaw dramatically. If Stephen Hawking's book was the beginning of the warming trend, it was certainly not the end of it. In the past decade, the number of books on science and religion has grown every year. Led by such classics as *God and the New Physics* by mathematical physicist Paul Davies, and *Religion in an Age of Science* by philosopher Ian Barbour, the field now includes such recent titles as *The Faith of A Physicist* by John Polkinghorne, and *Science and Theology: The New Consonance* by Ted Peters.

This spate of new books has less to do with a revival of interest in religion, however, than it does with recent discoveries in quantum physics. To the dismay of the scientists who made them, these discoveries have revealed a subatomic world that behaves very unscientifically. In pure defiance of Newton's clockwork universe, it is impossible to pin down, with waves turning into particles and particles into waves. What has mass one moment is pure energy the next, and none of it is predictable. The very act of observing a particle changes its behavior, which destroys the whole notion of scientific objectivity. A scientist cannot stand outside the world to watch it. The same particles that are busy responding to each other respond to the watcher as well, revealing a world that is not made up of manageable things but of constantly changing relationships.

While discoveries like these have led some scientists to despair, they have been welcomed by many people of faith. Admittedly, some are just sore losers who are glad to see science finally take a lick, but others feel vindicated for believing all along that the world had more to say than "tick-tock." Religious people may also have a higher aptitude for the absurd than some of our scientific brothers and sisters. We grew up on stories about talking bushes and flaming chariots, after all. Much that we rely on is invisible to us, and many of our belief systems have room in them for things that happen outside the everyday rules of cause and effect.

Whatever the reasons for the affinity, much is being made of it. I hope to make something of it myself today and tomorrow, but first let me assure you that I am not a scientist. It is true that I received a small microscope for my

ninth birthday and gave myself headaches by looking into it for hours at a time, with one eye squinted shut and the other eye gazing upon hairs as fat as tree trunks, pond water alive with wigglers, and drops of my own blood that were as beautiful to me as mosaics made of rubies.

The next year there was a chemistry set, with all the requisite explosions, followed by an electromagnetic device that made all the hairs on my arm stand up. When my fifth-grade science class studied genetics, I went to the pet store and bought a dozen mice. Half of them were white with pink eyes. The other half had dark fur and black eyes. My project was to breed a white mouse with black eyes, or—if that turned out to be impossible—then at least a dark mouse with pink eyes.

I do not remember whether or not I succeeded, but I do remember that I midwifed quite a lot of mice. There were the inevitable mutants, including a small, white mouse that did nothing but turn round and round in tiny circles all day and a mother mouse who ate each of her newborn babies in turn. By the time it was all over, there was a small colony of escapees who lived in the basement and one lone fugitive who somehow got loose in the family car. We never saw him, but sometimes we could hear him chewing the upholstery inside the seats, and once we found a little nest he had made in the trunk.

After I arrived at high school, my interest in science waned. It was made clear to me that there are only two kinds of people in the world: those who are good in English and those are good in math. Since I was good in English, I avoided math and all the other sciences along with it. I satisfied my science requirement with a course in geometry and somehow avoided dissecting a frog at all. Since it was the late sixties, I may have pled conscientious objection. However it happened, my mind was never troubled by the deeper mysteries of logarithms or the periodic table. So far as I recall, no one in high school violated this caste system. If you belonged to the drama club, you did not join the science club. If you were good at trigonometry, you assumed you would never understand the allegory in *Moby Dick*.

The standardized achievement test I took in my junior year confirmed these divisions. The math part of my brain and the verbal part of my brain were apparently so alien to one another that they required different tests and earned different scores. I deduced that I did not possess one intelligence but two—one a Ferrari and one a Ford, both housed in the same garage. I drove off to college with this schizophrenia intact and continued the pattern I had begun in high school. I satisfied my science requirement with a course in geology, sleeping well at night while my roommate wrestled the angels of organic chemistry.

When I became a religion major, I was taught that science and religion were two very different things. Science dealt with the physical world. It was interested in how things worked and preferred things that worked the same way every time. Once a physical body passed the test of predictability, it was awarded an equation that described its behavior, freeing science to move on to the next frontier. Science was objective. Science dealt with facts. Science had incredibly useful things to show for its efforts, such as vaccines, light bulbs, x-rays, and computers.

Religion, on the other hand, dealt with the spiritual world. It was less interested in how things worked than in why they mattered and who put them there in the first place. Since the spiritual transcended the merely physical, it could not be described in predictable equations. Religion was subjective. Religion dealt with values, and while it had its own useful things to show, such as schools, hospitals, churches and synagogues, these rarely made the headlines unless something went wrong.

In this manner, I learned that my being was divided in yet another way. There was not only a math part of me and a verbal part of me; there was also a physical part of me and a spiritual part of me. This latter division seemed to apply to the whole wide world as well. There was matter and there was spirit, I was taught, but they were not the same thing.

In seminary, I did not have to worry about science at all, since knowledge is pretty safely compartmentalized at the graduate level. While a few of my higher-achieving classmates took ethics classes at the medical school or dabbled in environmental law, most of us never left the divinity quadrangle, where our pleasant days were marked by the tolling of the bell in the chapel tower.

Later, when I was a hospital chaplain, I learned about “the God of the gaps.” While I certainly paid calls on patients facing nothing more serious than a gallbladder operation, the calls I remember are the ones that came in the middle of the night. By the time my beeper went off, the family had already been called at home and told that the patient had “taken a turn for the worse.” That meant the patient had died, but since hospital policy required a doctor to deliver the news, the other language was used (with the additional hope that people might drive more carefully if they did not know the truth).

The designated meeting place was the Family Room—a dreadful name, since it was really the room where families fell apart. I waited with them until the doctor arrived, and then I stepped out into the hall. At the moment, I cannot tell you why I did that. Maybe it was because, in many cases, the family knew the doctor much better than they knew me, and I wanted to allow them

their privacy. Or maybe it was because I found it so hard to watch a doctor already sick with failure face the fury of grieving relatives.

Most doctors did not stay very long. Their jobs, after all, were over. When we passed each other in the doorway wearing the badges of our offices—one with a stethoscope and the other with a Bible—we might as well have passed a baton. Science had gone as far as it could go. It was religion's turn to step into the breach.

Strangely or not, that is where I have felt most useful in my life—at the point where all the things that are supposed to work do not work anymore and people are faced with the vast mystery of being. I have always been comfortable with mystery, which may be another reason why I am not a scientist. I have never been able to prove any of the things that give me life. I have never been able to generate statistics on the value of truth, kindness, or beauty. I have never been able to document my theory that food eaten with someone else tastes better than food that is eaten alone, or that the surprising sound of Canada geese overhead can do more to restore hope than five hours of good therapy.

Because I am a preacher and not a scientist, I cannot assert that such things are true. I can only assert that they are "true for me," which lacks the pleasing ring of authority. Perhaps this is why religious people are so delighted when articles on the efficacy of prayer show up in medical journals. Who could hope for more authority than that? It is a strange sign of our times that the phrase, "Scientific studies show . . .," carries more weight than, "Thus says the Lord . . ."

Historians of science might say that the story I have just told you is a microcosm of the human story as a whole. In the ancient world, religion and science were little more than two ways of being curious. The truths each of them told were assumed to be divine truths. The world was not yet split into "sacred" and "secular" realms. The divorce came in the sixteenth century, when Copernicus guessed that the earth circled the sun instead of vice versa. For the first time, observed truth conflicted with revealed truth. Copernicus and the Bible could not both be right about the placement of the planets, and the scientific revolution began. The church stuck by the Bible, condemning both Copernicus and Galileo as heretics. The scientific community drew away from the church, choosing truth they could see over truth they could not. When the eighteenth-century astronomer Pierre Laplace explained nature as a self-sufficient mechanism, the Emperor Napoleon asked him where that left God. "I have no need of that hypothesis," Laplace replied.²

² Kenneth L. Woodward, "How the Heavens Go," *Newsweek* (July 20, 1998), 52.

But there may be no one whose scientific discoveries did more to upset religion than Charles Robert Darwin, whose book, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, appeared in 1872. Although he used the word “evolve” only once in that work—in the very last sentence—his name became synonymous with the theory of evolution. According to my Southern Baptist colleague Rick Austin, who teaches biology at Piedmont, evolution cannot properly be called a theory, since a theory is a hypothesis that has been repeatedly tested over time. While there is no doubt among even the most conservative scientists that natural selection does in fact occur, it is not possible to test the hypothesis that this mechanism explains the leap from great apes to humankind. Creation is not repeatable, at least not in our lifetimes. Scientifically speaking, all of our stories about it are hypotheses, and choosing any one of them to call true is an act of faith.

One Sunday afternoon a couple of years ago, I paid a call on a ninety-nine-year-old lady. She was one of those people whose appearance deceives. Behind her high white forehead and her clouded-over eyes lurked a fully-engaged and formidable mind. She wanted to talk about evolution, so we talked about evolution—or rather, I listened to her talk about evolution, and especially about the danger of teaching such a wrong-headed notion in public school.

“The very idea!” said this woman who was born sixteen years after Darwin died. “Can you imagine teaching children that they come from monkeys instead of from God?” I said something about how evolution itself seemed like a kind of miracle to me, but she was adamant. “You can’t have it both ways,” she said. “We are either here by design or we are here by chance.”

The very next day, I taught a class on the book of Genesis, explaining to my students how important it was for the Hebrews to get their story down on paper. This was especially true if Genesis were written during Israel’s exile in Babylon, as some scholars suppose. In the creation story of that foreign culture, the cosmos was made from the dismembered corpse of the goddess Tiamat, whose skull was split by her youngest son Marduk. By murdering his evil mother, Marduk brought order out of chaos and the world began.

This was not the story Hebrew parents wanted their Babylonian-born children to learn. So they set down their own account—about a good creation made by a good God—which went a long way toward setting them apart from the dominant culture in which they lived. “They reserved the right to say where they had come from,” I told my class. “They would not let anyone else do that for them, because they knew that their identity as a people depended on the stories they told about themselves.”

The minute I said that, I knew the old lady was right. In her own stubborn way, she was refusing the dominant scientific culture's definition of her as the haphazard product of random variations. That creation myth was as unacceptable to her as the one about Marduk and Tiamat. She reserved the right to say where she had come from, and the Genesis story was the one she chose.

My interest in these lectures is not to argue for or against evolution or anything else. I am simply questioning the notion that one must choose between religion and science when it comes to seeking the truth. This dualism, which has prevailed since the sixteenth century, carves the world into separate kingdoms of matter and spirit. It does the same thing to human beings, who may intuit the falseness of the division but seldom have the words to debate it. Even the old distinction between science as the study of "how things work" and religion as the study of "why" does not satisfy for long. Who can really keep those two questions separate?

Even Darwin said that his blood ran cold every time he looked into a vertebrate eye. Trying to imagine how many lucky mutations had to occur in order to come up with one eyeball taxed his faith in his own hypothesis, especially since eyes have apparently developed not once but many times throughout the ages. According to British biologist Brian Goodwin, "The eye developed independently in more than forty lineages during evolution," which suggests to him that natural selection is not the only force at work in the evolving order of creation.³

Between Genesis and Darwin lies a third alternative few of us learned about in school: a creation dependent neither on a literal reading of the Bible nor on the random variations of genes, but on laws of complexity we are only beginning to understand. In this story of creation, there is something beyond blind chance at work in evolution. Instead of a collection of genetic accidents, there are patterns more like blueprints that tend to organize cells the same basic way every time. These patterns explain why something as biologically complex as an eyeball can evolve in forty separate lineages.

Imagine stirring a bathtub full of water with your hand. You know pretty much what you will create when you do that. The water is not going to shoot straight up toward the ceiling, nor is it going to remain motionless. When you stir the water, you are going to create some form of ripples and waves every time. Their size and shape may change, but the general pattern is predictable. In the same way, explains the science writer George Johnson, "Eyes are not random accumulations of accidents, but patterns that arise 'as waves and

³ George Johnson, *Fire in the Mind: Science, Faith and the Search for Order* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 269.

spirals arise naturally in water.'¹⁴ Stir the water and you get waves. Stir the gene pool and you get eyes, kidneys, spinal cords, and brains. Stir it again and the details may change, but the patterns will remain familiar, thanks to the dynamics of self-organization.

The biologists exploring this line of thought are called "structuralists," since they see complex structures at work in evolution. If they are right, then belief in evolution does not have to mean belief in a haphazard creation. It can also mean belief in a creation governed by certain biological designs. Where do those designs come from? That depends on whom you ask. Religion has an answer it cannot prove: a Designer. Since science proceeds by proof, it cannot say, but only a true dolt can fail to be charmed by this idea: that in us, the design has evolved creatures who are capable of discerning the design. Like chickens penetrating the mysteries of their own eggs, we have been given the ability to glimpse our origins. Imagine your own eyeball pressed against the eyepiece of a microscope, looking down at the kind of light sensitive cell from which it evolved. Now imagine that light sensitive cell squinting back at you. How many millions of years are spanned in that glance? Enough to make the most sophisticated mind spin.

I suppose it is predictable that a preacher would like the structuralist view of things, since it leaves room for the divine mystery of design. It remains one story of creation among many, each with its own version of the truth. For people of faith, the story matters, but what matters even more is what we make of the story. What is the story behind the story? What is the meaning behind the so-called facts?

Forever and ever, one way Christians have spread the gospel is by learning the stories of the dominant cultures in which they live and then retelling them from a Christian perspective. That is how the pagan festival of the winter solstice in late December became the festival of Jesus' birth. We took a celebration of the s-u-n and turned it into a celebration of the s-o-n. That is also why Easter falls on the first Sunday on or after the first full moon on or after the spring equinox. The date does not have anything to do with the exact day Jesus rose from the dead. We simply took over an ancient fertility festival of new life on earth and reinterpreted it as a sacred festival of new life in Christ. Do you see how it works? The facts do not matter nearly as much as what we make of the facts. What is to prevent us from doing the same thing with the scientific creation story?

Once upon a time, say fifteen-billion years plus one day ago, neither "time" nor "space" had any meaning. There is not much more to say about that,

¹⁴ Ibid., 269.

except that nothing existed save a pinpoint of probability smaller than a proton that was the egg of the universe—what scientists call a “singularity.” Then the egg exploded—who knows why—and the universe expanded a trillion trillion times,⁵ curving to such a degree that particles popped out of quantum nowhere. When the universe was one second old, “every spoonful of stuff was denser than stone and hotter than the center of the sun.”⁶

As it expanded, energy cooled into what we call matter, beginning with particles and antiparticles. After a brief but crucial battle between matter and antimatter—the first war in heaven—matter won by the narrowest of margins (one part in one hundred million) and expansion continued. As the temperature dropped, hydrogen and helium formed in the few minutes they could. Then the temperature dropped some more so that heavier elements never had a chance to form.

All of this occurred in the first five minutes. After that, the universe settled into a half-million year cooling cycle during which little else happened. The cosmos existed as a hot cloud of ionized hydrogen and helium. Then the temperature dropped some more and stars began to form under the influence of gravity. As they grew in mass, things heated up inside of them, turning them into nature’s own nuclear fusion reactors. Using hydrogen as fuel, they converted the lighter elements into heavier ones, producing carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and iron.⁷ Eventually the new stars became middle-aged stars and finally old stars whose nuclear reactors broke down. Unable to defend themselves against their own gravity, the stars collapsed in on themselves, creating so much heat inside of them that they exploded in supernova. These were spectacular funerals. A supernova can release more energy in one minute than all the other stars in the sky combined.⁸ As it does, it bequeaths all its elements to the galaxy, seeding the cosmos with oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, and nitrogen.

If you remember your organic chemistry, then you know that these are the four elements most necessary for life. Our bodies are 65% oxygen, 18% carbon, 10% hydrogen, and 3.3% nitrogen, plus a smattering of the elements you can find listed on the bottle of your multi-mineral pills. Where did all those elements come from? From the creation of the cosmos. From the ashes of stars. Chemically speaking, the only difference between us and trees or rocks or chickens is the way in which our elements are arranged. During World War I, when blood was in short supply, wounded soldiers were

⁵ Paul Davies, *Superforce: The Search for a Grand Unified Theory of Nature* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1985), 192.

⁶ Timothy Ferris, *The Whole Shebang* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 32.

⁷ Denis Edwards, *Made From Stardust* (North Blackburn, Victoria, Australia: Collins Dove, 1992), 39.

⁸ Ferris, *The Whole Shebang*, 57.

sometimes transfused with sea water—and it worked! We are all made out of the same stuff. We are all children of the universe.⁹

Since you surely recognize this story as the story of the Big Bang, I should remind you that it is only a theory. Technically speaking it is not even that, since—as any scientist will tell you—a theory is a hypothesis that has been repeatedly tested. That will never happen with the universe, but cosmologists are busy working their ways backwards as fast as they can.

Meanwhile, how did we get here? You have no doubt heard what a close call it was. After the universe had been cooking along for ten billion years or so, our solar system congealed out of a nebular cloud. Earth did not start out blue and green, as we know it now. For those colors, it needed life, and for life it needed water and organic molecules, both of which were delivered to earth by comets. The oldest rocks on the surface of the earth date back some 3.8 billion years.¹⁰ A few of those rocks, off the coast of Australia, contain fossils of blue-green algae that are 3.5 billion years old.¹¹ The leap from those rocks to that algae is what no one, so far as I know, can explain.

What we do know is that the sun was exactly the right distance away for photosynthesis to occur, and because it did occur, the oxygen in the atmosphere was maintained at 20.9 percent so that further life forms could emerge.¹² In the same way that the elements inside of us link us to the stars, so our metabolisms link us to every other living creature. Every cell on earth, whether it belongs to a patch of blue-green algae or a human brain, consists of the same fifty organic molecules. Humans get their fuel from sugar while algae get theirs from the sun, but the basic reactions are the same. We all use four kinds of nucleotides. We all need twenty amino acids. We all carry our blueprints inside of us in the form of DNA or RNA.¹³ The cells in our bodies are living fossils over 3.5 billion years old. What they suggest is that all life comes from the same source, which makes us all kin: algae, tadpoles, skunks, and blue jays, not to mention elephants and cats.

Depending on your point of view, I suppose you could read this as good news (all creation is related) or as bad news (who wants to be kin to a skunk?). As I said earlier, the facts themselves do not supply the meaning. An interpreter supplies the meaning—a sentient being who can perceive, wonder, think, and say.

When I survey this fifteen-billion-year-old history (which has more good

⁹ Denis Edwards was the first to introduce me to this idea, and my retelling of the creation story is based on his in *Made From Stardust*.

¹⁰ Ferris, *The Whole Shebang*, 178.

¹¹ Edwards, *Made from Stardust*, 42.

¹² Ibid., 43.

¹³ Johnson, *Fire in the Mind*, 222.

guesses in it than hard facts), it is difficult to miss the most stunning miracle of creation: that in us, the universe has become conscious. We are the first creatures to articulate the motion of the planets. We are the first creatures to discern the commonality of all life. For those of us who believe God is the source from which we all arose, we are the first creatures to say so out loud.

This urge we have to understand the universe transcends the evolutionary model. This cosmic consciousness of ours is not necessary for our survival. We could eat, sleep, multiply, and prosper without ever thinking twice about where we came from or what it is all about. Meanwhile, science cannot explain how human consciousness works or where it comes from. It is as much a mystery as the moment before the universe began. I spoke earlier of how much time is required for an eyeball to look back at a light sensitive cell. How much more time does it take for quantum particles to compose hymns of praise? Whether your answer is seven days or fifteen-billion years, it remains a miracle: that we are here at all, and able to praise our maker. God may well prefer the sound of spring peepers, but I have to believe there was joy in heaven when the first human being looked at the sky and said, "Thank you for this."

Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, and Sallie McFague have all preceded me in this thinking. They would agree with the British biochemist Arthur Peacocke that "we are that part of the cosmos consciously capable of being aware of and of responding to that immanent Presence."¹⁴ Or as Paul put it in his letter to the Romans, "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God . . ." (8.19). In human beings, matter has become aware of itself. In us, God has given all creation a voice.

While I was putting all this together, I asked a friend how it related to the biblical story of creation. "Basically," I said, "it looks as if we all started out as rocks. The story I want to tell is how God taught the children of rocks to sing hymns, but how does that square with the book of Genesis?"

"Dust?" he said. Of course! Dust. Why didn't I think of that? Dust is all God has ever needed to make life: the quantum dust from which the stars arose, the stardust by which the primal elements were sown, the earth dust from which the rocks were made, and the rock dust on which the first creatures grew.

"Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2.7). Whichever version of the story you choose to believe, here is ample reason to rejoice.

¹⁴ Arthur Peacocke, *God and the New Biology* (London: Dent and Sons, 1986), 129.

I Am Thirsty

by A. K. M. ADAM

Assistant Professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary, A. K. M. Adam preached this sermon on April 2, 1999 during the Good Friday Service in Miller Chapel. Dr. Adam is the author of several books, including What Is Postmodern Biblical Criticism? (1995).

“ “ I AM THIRSTY.”

That’s why we come here, isn’t it? I mean, I don’t want to speak for anyone else, but I come here because I’m thirsty—thirsty for something that I can’t simply order at Small World or the Grad Bar. Why else would anyone be here this afternoon, when we could be going to the movies, or catching up on our rest, or even getting some work done? We come here, day by day, looking for that drop of fresh, cool water that will help sustain us through another day of tramping through the rocky ground of our daily lives in this world. I come here ’cause I’m thirsty.

*That thirst is something serious and true. It’s a feeling that’s personal and particular, but when *I’m thirsty*, you know in your body and in your heart what that feels like. You’ve taken those long walks, on hot days, with nary a water fountain in sight. You’ve had those times where there was a soda machine, but you didn’t *have* those twenty-five cents for a ginger ale—when your mouth was dry, your feet were sore and your shoulders heavy, when folks might have strolled by you with an ice-cold, long-neck bottle, but no drop for you. When my heart was heavy, and my soul was troubled, and the only refreshment at hand might buy me a night of relief only in exchange for a morning of regret, you know what that thirst is about. You know why I’m thirsty, or you wouldn’t have come here this afternoon.*

You showed up at chapel today because here we have an assurance of relief. Here we look to someone who invited us, saying, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink.” He offered us true refreshment: “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” We believe in him when he promises us, “Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.” We—like Peter—don’t know where else we can go to hear the words that satisfy our thirst for life and truth.

So, I keep on turning up, in the back pew there on your left as you come in. You all know that. And I especially make it a point to come here on Friday,

because Friday—everyone knows—is the celebration of the Lord's Supper at Miller Chapel. Friday is the day that we approach with awe and faith to receive the cup that Jesus poured out for us. On Friday we drink from the cup of eternal life, the true drink by which we abide in Jesus, and he abides in us.

Where can you get a sip of living water if not here? Here we turn to One who offers not just tepid old tap water, but the true and living water that abides to eternity. Here we come to One who gave us water turned to the finest wine at the wedding feast of his friend. Here we come to the One who saved the man who was too slow to climb into the healing waters of Siloam. Here we come to One who stilled the threatening waters of the sea *and walked across the backs of the waves* to bring his friends to safety. If you can't get a sip of water here, there's no point in rolling down to Wawa's—you just don't get it at all.

But our timing is off. Or perhaps our timing is right, but *we* are off, off kilter, off base, off true, just plain *off* today because as we sit in silence and raise our tired hands in our thirsty supplication we hear his voice. Today, *he* says, "I am thirsty," just the way he asked our sister in Samaria for a drink.

"*I am thirsty,*" he says, baking dry in the midday sun. Well, what about us? Where now is his promise of relief? I thought he had drink that we didn't know about.

"*I am thirsty,*" he says, hanging, burning, from the cross. I know: We can change this water for vinegar and see how he likes that.

"*I am thirsty,*" as his sweat beads and drops, as his lifeblood trickles from the wounds in his head, in his hands and feet; watch him, maybe he's going to make some of those rivers of "living water" flow from his heart.

He is thirsty this afternoon. He's not about the task of filling a bowl with water to wash our weary feet, the way he did last night. He's not baptizing us with water, so that, filled with the Spirit, we may enter the Kingdom of God. This hot, dry, weary, parching, *thirsty* afternoon, he is drinking the cup that his Father has given him. And I have to ask myself: Am I *that* thirsty?

The Unreality of God

by ROBERT C. DYKSTRA

Robert C. Dykstra, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling at Princeton Theological Seminary, preached this sermon on October 6, 1998, in Miller Chapel. Dr. Dykstra is the author of Counseling Troubled Youth (1997).

When he [Jesus] returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" (Mark 2:1–12)

I.

SHE WAS BEING so unrealistic, and it was beginning to bother me. The vase sat on the kitchen counter in plain view day after day, week after week, and she seemed incapable of doing anything about it. She was paralyzed by love for it, no doubt, but paralyzed nonetheless, unable to bring herself to do what we all knew she eventually would have to do.

I was living at the time with this wonderful, elderly woman of considerable means, who rented rooms in her spacious home just down the street on Library Place to poor graduate students the likes of me. In her dining room, standing alone in a reserved space on the buffet under the gleam of recessed accent lights, stood a crystal vase of Steuben glass. It was the most beautiful vase I had ever seen. It had a deep center but then quickly flared out to a wide,

flat rim, so that when she would fill it with fresh tulips they soon would fall lazily down around the rim, the way of tulips, into a graceful swirl. I had never thought of lazy tulips as objects of much beauty before, but in the Steuben they were elegant. She loved the vase and so did I.

Steubens and I were not entirely strangers, though. Even before I moved into her home I used to take the train from Princeton to Manhattan every now and again, and I'd walk down Fifth Avenue with its famous stores—Saks Fifth Avenue, Tiffany's, F.A.O. Schwartz, and the rest, one marbled exterior after another. The Steuben Glass store was there with the rest, and more than once I'd wandered in to gaze in its darkened rooms, more museum than store. I would gag on the price tags: five thousand dollars for this vase, ten for that, thirty thousand for the little crystal polar bears. I'd been exposed to Steuben before, although since we traveled in different social circles this was the first time we were living together up close and personal.

You know what I'm going to say next. But it wasn't my fault. There was another graduate student living in that home at the time, and one day, when our landlady was out of town for a week and the other student was washing out the remains of some tulips from the Steuben, she dingled it on the sink. A one-inch triangle of glass broke from its rim, and the rest of it cracked from the center point of the triangle all the way down to its base. The other student, even more economically destitute than I was, could only cry. We left it in all its pathos on the kitchen counter, sick to death at what had happened.

Our landlady returned, found her beloved vase where we'd left it, and found herself, understandably enough, a little broken as well. She wasn't angry so much as bereaved, and for days that turned to weeks she left it lying there in state on the kitchen counter, unable to bring herself to do the inevitable. "Maybe they can fix it somehow," she would say from time to time, looking for any glimmer of encouragement from me. "You can't repair broken crystal," I'd reply, realistic to the core. And she knew it, too. She was being so unrealistic, and it was beginning to bother me. She was paralyzed by love for it, no doubt, but paralyzed nonetheless, unable to face what we all knew she had to face. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, sand to Steuben to sand.

II.

He wasn't the sole paralyzed one in that room, only the most obvious.

His friends, too, were paralyzed in a way, unable to face what everyone knew they had to face. For weeks that turned into months, his friends had refused to face facts, unwilling to hear what everyone kept telling them. The prognosis was worse than grave, they'd say; nerve cells simply don't

regenerate like other cells, they'd say. Yet his friends refused to face reality, hauling him from one clinic to the next. "Maybe you can fix him somehow," looking for any glimmer of encouragement in the doctor's eyes. "You can't repair broken spinal cords," they'd reply, realistic to the core. And the friends knew it, too. They were paralyzed by love for him, no doubt, but paralyzed nonetheless, unable to face what everyone knew they had to face.

You can't help but pity the delusion in their determination to give it yet another try. "He's doing some remarkable things," they'd heard of Jesus.

So they loaded up their paralyzed friend and hauled him over to Peter's house where Jesus was preaching the Word that day. If we were talking about people in their right minds, they would've given up the ghost as soon as they saw the traffic backed up for blocks. But these were friends paralyzed by love, undaunted by reality, so rather than face facts and turn back, they hoofed it instead to the back alley and up the fire escape and in an inspired act of intercessory vandalism started digging right through the mud roof of the little house: They removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. You've got to wonder what's going on upstairs with these guys, if you catch my meaning.

For some reason, Jesus didn't object to this terrible interruption, perhaps because Jesus himself was never one to be all that daunted by the facts, never much constrained by reality. Whatever the reason, what happened next was the craziest thing of all: When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven," not exactly what the friends were hoping to hear but, on the other hand, not bad given what could have been the fallout from their newly engineered skylight.

III.

He wasn't the sole paralyzed one in that room, only the most obvious.

I worked for a year as a chaplain in the spinal cord intensive care unit of a hospital in downtown Chicago, where most of the patients were young men my age recently paralyzed by car accidents or athletic injuries or gunshot wounds, a frightening place for me to work. It all seemed so senseless, so hopeless, so final. Nerve cells simply don't regenerate like other cells. And in retrospect, I think that the young chaplain was likely as paralyzed by it all as the patient with Frankenstein's bolts screwed into his head.

He was in his twenties, a "complete" injury—medical jargon for a fully-severed spinal cord—in the first days, weeks maybe, after his accident. We talked, and he told me about all the things he was going to do to get to walking again, how hard he was going to work at regaining the use of his legs. I knew

otherwise, of course, and maybe he knew it, too. Since I thought it might be better for him to face the music now and begin to adjust to the reality of his injury, I told him as gently as I could that he wouldn't walk again. Those were the last words he allowed me to say to him.

The young man's father got wind of what I'd told his son and in fury called up my supervisor demanding that disciplinary action be taken. My supervisor investigated and determined that I had read the chart properly, I knew the facts, I was being realistic with the young man, I was telling the truth; he backed me up and nothing more came of it.

But it's so obvious to me now that the young man in this case was right, and that I was wrong. I'm convinced now that my reality was far too small, too arrogant, too petty, too pat. Why is it that we ministers in particular, who collect paychecks by proclaiming the incredible, are of all people most lacking in holy imagination? I'm getting tired of it. I'm sick to death of being paralyzed by reality, and if given the choice, I'm beginning to think that I'd much rather be paralyzed by self-delusion. There's something far more attractive to me about my landlady's crazy hopes for her beloved vase, about the young man's friends tearing out the roof, than all my little certainties put together. If I were that young man in that hospital, I hope that I'd have thrown me out of that room, too.

IV.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Jesus' words didn't sit well with some there who could afford courtside seats, some there who kept suffering from a bad bout of realism. Some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

But get this: The scribes were right, realistic to the core—even Jesus must've known that. It's one thing for Jesus to forgive him if the paralytic had committed sins against Jesus, but quite another if he'd committed sins against someone else. The scribes were right. God alone can forgive those kinds of sins. Yet in an act of intercessory vandalism no less destructive of conventional structures than the inspired carnage of the paralytic and his friends, Jesus razed the roof with his blasphemy, "*Your sins are forgiven.*"

Jesus ripped right through the pastoral professionals' little religious truths, their little social conventions, and when the dust settled and the air cleared he could see furrowed in their faces what was written in their minds. He said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to

say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and take your mat and walk?’” And while we, who prefer our little realities verifiably served up, would answer by saying that, well, we really would need to see it to believe it since everyone knows that nerve cells just don’t regenerate like the rest. Jesus leaves little doubt that nerve cells are nothing compared to what he’s up against with sin.

The young man on that mat was not the sole person paralyzed in that room, only the most obvious.

V.

“I think I’m going to call up Steuben to see if they might not be able to fix it,” she said to me one more time. I tried to keep from rolling my eyes. Why couldn’t she just give it up? Undaunted by my less-than-enthusiastic response, call up Steuben she finally did. She told them that she loved the vase and she knew it was crazy and all, but wondered if they might have some suggestions as to what she might do.

They were so sorry for her loss, they said, but the vase she described was no longer in production. What had I told her? But what Steuben said next took our breath away. What they said was this: If she would bring the broken vase up to their store, their artists could fashion a replacement at Steuben’s expense. They’d copy and replace it, no charge. Steuben would bear the high cost of what we ourselves had broken.

VI.

Our realities are so small, yours and mine. Our realities are, “You can’t fix broken crystal,” or, “Nerve cells don’t regenerate,” or, “You’d better turn back since there’s such a crowd around Jesus,” or, “You can’t forgive someone’s sins unless they’ve sinned specifically against you.” These realities are true, yes. True, but too small.

You see, this was no ordinary vase. This vase was a Steuben. I had failed in my little reality to consider the source, the maker, of this vase. The young man on his mat, the young man in his hospital room, were not just any paralytics to be dismissed by realistic doctors or by pseudo-courageous chaplains, but someone’s beloved friend, a father’s beloved son, a Steuben, handcrafted from sand by God. So many paralyzed people, paralyzed by realities so deadly because they are partly true. Give me the illusions of my landlady for her beloved vase, give me the delusions of the paralytic’s friends,

give me the blasphemies of Jesus any day over my pathetic little realities, my pious little orthodoxies. By the time the dust has settled and the air has cleared, you've got to wonder just who the paralyzed in this story really are.

But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sin”—he said to the paralytic—“*I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.*” And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

O Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
O Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
O Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us your
peace.

It Will Surely Come

by CLEO J. LARUE, JR.

*Cleo J. LaRue, Jr., Associate Professor of Homiletics at Princeton Theological Seminary, preached this sermon on June 26, 1997, in Miller Chapel during the Princeton Institute of Theology. Dr. LaRue is the author of *The Heart of Black Preaching* (forthcoming).*

Text: HABAKKUK 2:1-4

THIS SELF-SUFFICIENT AGE in which we live operates on the premise that we can always take charge of our lives. We are taught to believe that no matter what confronts us, with enough energy and courage, we can forge ahead and brush aside all obstacles and obstructions that impede our path.

This take-charge attitude is imparted to us as wisdom. It is instilled in us early on. It is the premise upon which we are taught to succeed. This notion that we can always take charge of our lives is the reason, I believe, so many love to quote William Ernest Henley's "Invictus," which says:

It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

This sounds good, but the common understanding of it is not true, for it flies in the face of the providence of God. Too often, those who recite these lines glean from them some sense that they alone are responsible for the outcome of their lives. The psalmist in the long ago had a better sense of our destinies when he said, "Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (Ps 100:3).

I suppose it is possible to think that we can always take charge of our lives, especially when we are young and healthy, or reasonably prosperous, or when we are completely in charge of our mental faculties. It is possible to believe life will always respond to our strong-willed wishes and desires, especially when rank and privilege are our constant companions and the bright morning of opportunity shines so radiantly upon our paths. Under such circumstances, one could conclude that this take-charge approach works in any and all situations.

But the truth of the matter is that different seasons come to all our lives. There are seasons when all that we touch turns to gold. There are seasons when the next step in our lives is so clear and so close we would seem foolish not to take it. There are those moments in life when God is in God's heaven

and all is right with the world. But such times do not last forever. In truth, seasons of loss, helplessness, and waiting come to all our lives.

One of life's most difficult lessons is learning how to wait on God through a dry and difficult season; a season where we are forced to wait, in spite of our nerves of steel and steadfast prayers, in spite of the American mindset that tells us we can always take charge. We find ourselves unable to effect the kind of outcome we would like to see. It is for this reason—our difficulty in learning how to wait—that our text is taken from this strange, hard-to-find-book called Habakkuk. This so-called minor prophet has a major word to say to us about how to wait on God.

In Habakkuk, we find a word of encouragement for those who have grown impatient waiting on the promises of God. We find a word of hope for those who, even now, are struggling to make sense of dashed hopes, shattered dreams, and uncertain futures. There is a word for people who, because of life's uneven journey, find themselves ailing and, therefore, in need of a prescription for hard times. Habakkuk is just what the doctor ordered.

What is going on in the world of this seventh-century prophet that ushers in his own season of waiting? Habakkuk complains to God about the rampant injustice in Judean society. He asks God how long he would allow the oppression of the weak by the strong among God's own people, and he wondered how long it would be before God brought judgment upon God's own wayward people. But Habakkuk did not like God's answer, for God told him he would use a heathen king and a heathen army—Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians—to discipline his own people. This answer confused Habakkuk. He knew that the Babylonians were no paragons of virtue, and he just could not believe that a pure and holy God would stand idly by and watch them swallow up his people.

Old Testament scholar J. J. M. Roberts says it is at this point that Habakkuk, unwilling to accept God's answer, talks back to God—as did other great people of faith in the Old Testament. Difficult seasons will make you talk back to God, not out of irreverence, but out of a sense of confusion and perplexity about the purposes of God in your life. It is easy to wait on God as long as we can make some sense of what God is doing; as long as there is some discernible design to the movement of God in our lives. But when God shocks us and surprises us and refuses to answer our prayers as we said them, when we said them, and how we said them, then it becomes difficult to wait and hard not to talk back.

What do you do when you are no longer sure how God is going to work out God's purpose in your life? What do you do when you are not even sure that

God is at work in your life? You are unhappy where you are and yet unsure about where God is leading. What do you do when you find yourself in a difficult season of waiting where heaven is silent or the trumpet is sounding forth an uncertain sound? Our natural instinct, especially those of us who have bought into the take-charge attitude, is to try to make something happen; to try to make our season of waiting come to an end. It is here that T.S. Eliot's advice in "Ash Wednesday" is so appropriate: "Teach us to sit still." There are seasons in all our lives when we shall have no choice but to wait.

Though we have no choice but to wait, we do have a choice as to how we shall wait. Some people wait out a difficult season in a spirit of rebellion. They go through life angry and disheartened, and they make their displeasure known to any and all who will listen. Some wait out a difficult season in a spirit of resignation. Life for them loses all purpose and perspective, so they become cynical about life, and they trudge forward with a dull and listless spirit. Of God's guiding hand and tender mercies they sarcastically proclaim, "What will be, will be."

There is, however, a third way to wait on God through our own dry and difficult seasons, and it is the wait of anticipation. Habakkuk suggests that this is the way the righteous wait. Their wait is alert and charged with expectation. Their stand is one of tip-toe anticipation. They wait in the fervent hope of a brighter tomorrow morning when night with all its shadows will be passed away. Habakkuk, confused about the purposes of God in his life and the lives of his people, waits through a difficult season for an answer from God. Finally, God speaks to him of a vision whose fulfillment awaits its appointed time. An appointed time indicates a set time in the future that can neither be rushed nor delayed. An appointed time means God has a fixed and ordered time to move decisively in our lives. Its arrival and duration are ordered by God and not by us.

In the text before us, God does not even tell Habakkuk the contents of the vision. God simply assures him that it is a trustworthy vision that at the end shall speak and not lie. It is a vision in which Habakkuk can find security, for the one who reveals it is able to back up what it promises. When you wait on that which God has promised, it is not a lie on which you have fixed your heart. It is not a vain hope that will bear no fruit. It is a promise that will surely come. The one who makes this promise is none other than God—the Alpha and the Omega; the one who stands above the flux and flow of human history; the God who promises and cannot lie; the God who is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore. This God says it will surely come.

This is the word of hope I leave with you today. Dry and difficult seasons when we are forced to wait do not last forever. In their own way, they too are a part of the purposes of God. But when your season of waiting is over, what has been dry and desolate in your life shall blossom as a rose, and what has been so bitter to your soul shall be made sweet. Then, you, too, can join in singing that old African-American spiritual:

I'm so glad trouble don't last always
O, my Lord, O, my Lord,
What shall I do?

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Reading Ecclesiastes is a little like gazing at one of Escher's puzzling drawings—had Escher been a veritable genius. One follows a train of thought, which then dissolves into its apparently impossible opposite. No wonder then, that on Qohelet none of the commentators are agreed.

Seow's new Anchor Bible commentary has virtues that are helpful to pastors and other readers of this fascinating book. It does not lose the forest for the trees, and yet attends to the telling detail. It treats the scholarly issues and problems honestly and acutely, without losing the lay reader en route. It shows the reader the range of interpretive options, yet maintains its own balanced view of the paradox-rich whole. Indeed, this commentary has the nuance and balance that permits readers to see the point of what Michael Fox has called "Qohelet and his contradictions." While no single commentary says it all, if readers and pastors can afford only one book on Ecclesiastes, I would suggest Seow.

Seow sets the book in the Persian period. He builds his case upon a rich comparison with socioeconomic indicators contained in Aramaic texts from the period. This background is especially suggestive with reference to economic metaphors like "profit" and "lot." While not all will follow Seow's dating, these sociolinguistic comparisons make a lasting contribution to our understanding of the book.

In terms of worldview, Seow sees as fundamental the gap between heaven and earth, between the transcendent God above and humans below. Yet unlike an older school of interpreters who wished to excise God from the book (as pious interpolations), Seow rightly presents the book as a "theological anthropology." The book relentlessly focuses on the limits and calamities of the human condition ("all is vanity"), yet it never does so without a profound awareness of the reality of God. Qohelet, says Seow, moves from description of the human condition to ethics: since this is the way the world is, how should humans respond, how should they live?

In essence, life is a gift and both its good and bad are in God's control. Humans should not presume that they have control of anything ultimately, not even of their own daily destiny. Accidents happen. Death, injustice, pain, ignorance, and folly are the common human lot. Life is ephemeral and inscrutable. How then to live? By remembering that God is in heaven and that he calls humans to account. But also by enjoying the relative (though "vain")

goods that are God's gift. For these things, both work and play, family and worship, weal and woe, are in God's hands. Life is a gift and that is enough. Thus, the book's epilogue ("fear God and keep his commandments") is not at odds with Qohelet's worldview but does set limits to possible misreadings of his difficult conundrums.

Reading as a human (not merely as a scholar), I find that Seow's approach to Qohelet not only makes sense of the internal and external data but is also, somehow, strangely comforting in the face of life's darkness. He presents an utterly, unflinchingly, realistic Qohelet. This is a faith that engages life without illusion or pretense. Somehow, that intensifies the joy.

Raymond C. Van Leeuwen
Eastern College

Dykstra, Robert C. *Counseling Troubled Youth*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997. Pp. 144. \$16.00.

Many pastors, therapists, and lay persons shy away from working with youth out of a deep sense of inadequacy, feeling they have too little knowledge, skill, or patience. Robert Dykstra, assistant professor of pastoral care and counseling at Princeton Theological Seminary, in his moving and deeply penetrating book does not make the task of working with youth struggling with drugs, behavioral problems, eating disorders, pregnancy, alcohol, and school failures any less daunting. Yet his compelling and illuminating psychological and theological analysis of troubled youth will deepen understanding and give courage not only to those who counsel youth, but also to any parent, pastor, or layperson that works closely with adolescents.

Dykstra is a superb translator of complex psychological theory (object relations and self-psychology) into language that invites the reader into a more full and empathetic understanding of the adolescent. He writes a superb and concise introduction to the work of James F. Masterson and Heinz Kohut and applies their theories with grace and wisdom to four superb case studies of adolescents. But he does much more than give us illustrations of theory applied to clinical practice; he develops a theological framework for seeing more deeply into the lives of adolescents.

Dykstra argues that many of the problems that youth face today stem from a loss of hope, a sense of despair in a meaningful future, and a dislocation from any historical past. This loss of hope in a meaningful future has several accompanying characteristics: a sense of malaise and depression, helplessness, a diffuse sense of shame, guilt and rage, a preoccupation with death and

violence, compulsive hungers, a blurring of boundaries between self and others, a tendency to act out one's feelings, and a preoccupation with oneself. These symptoms are frequently referred to in psychological literature as "disorders of the self." In two engaging and revealing case studies, Dykstra shows that when the self identifies only with its past it becomes "awash in apathetic despair" that gives rise to the depression of the borderline and pathological narcissism.

Dykstra does not flinch at sharing the depth of despair of particular adolescents, their parents and caregivers, but he advocates an approach with troubled youth that sees not simply a "disordered self," but understands the self theologically as an "eschatological self." The life of the self, he contends, is not simply *futurum*, the forward projection of what we already know, what we can expect to be based on the present, but also *adventus*, the breaking in of that which is coming and that cannot be completely contained in the past or the present. "One becomes oneself, or better, comes to oneself, from the future as well as the past, from the self that is penultimately lodged, in part, in others, ultimately in Christ, a self actually being delivered from some future beyond one's power to control." Thus, the eschatological self, while not denying the shaping influence of the past, is equally open to future surprise that comes from others or the Other.

"The burden of the eschatological clinician becomes then one of clinging unceasingly to hope, with caregiver as resolute sleuth of hope, tracking even less-than-promising leads that might suggest the divine presence seeking good in the young person's life." In order to search for those factors that conspire for survival and hope, one must be willing to enter first into the complexities of pain and loss of a young person's life through what he calls the "stewardship of pain." Such stewardship empathetically assists adolescents to embrace frightening apocalyptic feelings like suicidal depression, homicidal rage, guilt, shame, panic, helplessness, hopelessness, emptiness, and the realistic suffering they entail. When these feelings can be faced, the defensive suffering of acting out the feelings in behaviors can be lessened. Such feelings can only be faced when conditions of safety are established. This requires the making and keeping of promises that involve the confronting of destructive behaviors or beliefs without being seduced or manipulated by a young person. Simultaneously, one must empathetically mirror the adolescent's newly emerging self. Dykstra emphasizes that in order to create the promise of safety, one must include an understanding of hope whose horizon transcends this life alone and a promise that can even include the supreme suffering of abandon-

ment that is at the center of the eschatological claims of Jesus Christ and the Christian life.

It is curious that Dykstra did not draw upon the work of narrative therapists Michael White or Davie Epstein or the work of Steve de Shazer for whom *adventus* is key to the self's becoming. These theorists would provide rich psychological resources for understanding and accompanying the eschatological self.

Counseling Troubled Youth is a gift to those who desire to be stewards of pain for troubled youth and assist young persons toward the promise of a new future.

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Capps, Donald. *Living Stories: Pastoral Counseling in Congregational Context*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998. Pp. 214. \$16.00.

In *Living Stories*, Donald Capps, professor of pastoral theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, envisions a new pastoral counseling model that challenges the status quo. Capps observes that many pastors are intimidated by specialized pastoral counseling and thus refrain from practicing this ministry in their congregations. If, however, pastoral counseling is an essential ministry that enhances the life of the congregation, as he argues throughout the book, then more pastors must be enabled to practice it. Toward this end, Capps says that the congregational context must be allowed to shape our understanding of pastoral counseling, both what it is and how it is to be done.

Central to pastoral counseling shaped by the congregational context is the concept of narrative, or story. In pastoral counseling, persons tell stories within a constructive framework of interpretation. The interpretive ability of the pastor is the key that unlocks possibilities for persons needing to re-story their lives with the pastor's help. Helping pastors learn this kind of interpretation is the primary purpose, and strength, of *Living Stories*. Drawing on the narrative approach in contemporary family therapy, Capps provides pastors with several therapeutically helpful ways of identifying the types of stories that individuals, couples, and families often tell in counseling. He also emphasizes the importance of the self in the narrative approach to pastoral counseling by discussing the Rogerian focus on the internal experiencing of the individual.

In addition to narrative, Capps draws on the brief-therapy movement in contemporary family therapy. This really is the heart of the book. Three brief therapists are introduced in a very creative and helpful fashion. Each brief therapist tends to tell a particular type of story demonstrating how they do their therapeutic work. Milton Erickson tells what Capps calls the *inspirational*

story, which demonstrates the art of the power of suggestion, or of motivating those needing help. Paul Watzlawick tells the *paradoxical story*, which demonstrates the art of untying the knots of double-binds. And, Steve de Shazer tells the *miracle story*, which demonstrates the art of identifying exceptions to troubling behavior that can be used as the basis for change. Pastors are invited to draw on these brief therapists and, in addition, to identify the type of story they tend to tell about their own pastoral counseling. Is it more like the inspirational story or the paradoxical story or the miracle story?

Pastors also are invited to discover the story orientation of Jesus as he encounters people in the Gospels. Capps continually moves from the stories that the three brief therapists tell to the stories of Jesus, and this helps pastors appropriate Jesus' multifaceted orientation, which has surprising parallels to the inspirational, paradoxical, and miracle story orientations. His discussion of Jesus culminates in an intriguing dialogue between gossip (which pastors will appreciate), pastoral counseling, and what he identifies as Jesus' value of openness. Through this discussion, he shows that pastoral counseling has congregation-enhancing effects going beyond the counselee. In pastoral counseling, a positive model of communication is practiced that may spread out into the congregation, much like gossip spreads. But, unlike most gossip, it does not exclude and hurt people. Instead, it encourages the congregation to embody the value of openness.

Living Stories challenges the hegemony of specialized pastoral counseling as well as the reticence of pastors to practice pastoral counseling. By bringing together narrative and brief therapy, Capps presents pastors with a model that fits in well with the whole of ministry. It is flexible, short-term, encourages pastors to exercise creativity, and takes pastoral power seriously. Readers will not find case examples of pastors doing pastoral counseling or a focus on ecclesiology. Yet, they will find that Capps has listened carefully to pastors and has raised an important issue. After a half century of pastoral counseling, the very fact that the question of its viability for congregational ministry can be raised speaks volumes. Capps' new book is highly recommended.

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Johnson, William Stacy. *The Mystery of God: Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations of Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997. Pp. 217. \$18.00.

The Mystery of God is a promising and thoughtful reading of Karl Barth's theology that seeks to consider its relevance to nonfoundationalist approaches

to ethics. By focusing on God's mystery as revealed in Jesus Christ, Johnson's work offers an insightful and innovative reading of Barth's "christocentrism." If Christ is at the center and this center is revealed to be a mystery, then it cannot be a center as we ordinarily conceive it. Rather, Christ as the center of theology calls us outside of ourselves, displacing the foundations of thought and ethics, and opening us to responsibility to others in our world.

For Johnson, God's mystery means not only that theological inquiry retains an openness that resists human appropriation, but also that this openness calls for an openness to resources from human experience outside of the church. As the center "decenters" us, in Johnson's terms, it calls for careful and concerned interpretation of our world, culminating in an ethics focused outside the church as well as within it. The recovery of resources from outside of the Christian tradition as resources for theological inquiry—and showing that this is consistent with Barth's intended method—is one of the strongest and most fruitful claims of this book.

Consistent with this outward-directed focus of theology is Johnson's argument for an ethical verification of theology. Johnson's argument specifically focuses on the importance of hope as a public act, taking an interest in the world outside of oneself on the way from faith to an eschatological fulfillment of love. To this end, he raises the intriguing possibility that Barth's later writings on baptism may hold the key to innovative readings of Barth that open onto the world beyond the church. As represented in baptism, what are commonly considered "sacraments" are not how we know God, but rather how we begin to respond to God in an open, public, and ethical manner.

Johnson's argument brings several questions to mind. He admits that his book can be read as an interpretation of "what Barth *should* have said." Johnson is right that there is a tension between Barth's theory and his practice, particularly in terms of Barth's call for openness to resources outside the church while failing to make use of these himself. While Barth is careful not to equate scriptural particulars with the mystery of God as such, God's being the one who loves in freedom (and therefore is mystery) is revealed to us *through* scripture. Little is done to reconcile the open-endedness of ethics with Barth's scriptural exegesis and theological method, which was just as important as his intention in challenging nineteenth-century theology. One is left wondering: Can one reconcile Barth's practice and exegesis with Johnson's emphasis on otherness, or is there a deeper tension between Barth's intended openness and restricted practice? More engagement with Barth's method and biblical hermeneutics, both constructively and critically, would demonstrate how one should move forward in the direction called for by Johnson.

Johnson's focus on the triadic structure of God's interaction with the world serves as the basis for his conception of divine activity in the world. Our present state of hope—directed from creation towards sanctification—retains an openness because neither the eschatological end nor beginning is available to us. Yet his emphasis on the eschatological character of salvation may end up limiting his emphasis on an "ethics of otherness" in the here and now. Openness and fragmentation, in Johnson's view, remain something to be overcome, and thus are still thought within the limits of totality. Responsibility may thereby be circumscribed in spite of his best intention. Johnson recognizes that creation, reconciliation, and redemption are part of the same event, and his rethinking of the openness of creation and redemption may avoid this danger. More clarity on this difficult point would be useful, in particular by articulating in more detail the relation of Johnson's ethics of otherness to the messianic (though non-eschatological) thought of responsibility found in thinkers such as Levinas and Derrida.

Nonetheless, Johnson's book does open the engaging and moving possibility of a Barthian theology that, starting from God's revelation in Jesus Christ, recognizes the goodness of the world and of one's responsibility and activity therein. The *Mystery of God* is a promising if somewhat limited step towards the retrieval of theology for ethical reflection today.

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Fenn, Richard K. *The End of Time: Religion, Ritual, and the Forging of the Soul*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1997. Pp. 256. \$24.95.

Using sociology, history, and psychoanalysis, Richard Fenn, professor of theology and society at Princeton Theological Seminary, takes one on a trip around the world and through history, sailing from the Aghori ascetics to Argentina's dirty war, from the court of Herod to the Oklahoma bombing of 1995, in his discussion of the problem of the end of time for societies and the individual. He writes that "societies begin to run out of time for many reasons: not only when disaster is imminent or when influences, once thought to be due to outsiders, clearly threaten to disintegrate a society from within, but also from internal sources of disruption or dismay. Every society will run out of time if it cannot transform its young people into adults and its single people into married ones."

Fenn argues that rituals are a way in which societies deal with running out of time, and these rituals vary in the ways in which they work, within different

social systems. In the central chapters of his book, Fenn examines four functions of ritual connected to four types of social systems: transformation, aversion, purification, and restoration. Fenn shows what happens when these rituals fail as well as when they succeed. He concludes that “at their most effective, rituals forge a soul, an innermost self, able to stand the test of time. When they are effective, rituals therefore present communities and societies with something of a problem: a soul that can transcend time on its own.” Therefore a successful ritual will often defeat itself as the individual no longer feels the need for it, though some rituals can continue working through time under the right conditions. However, when the outside world impinges upon a social system or is seen to do so by those within the system, rituals often fail and fascist movements arise, seeking to purge the world of alien influences. Here, Fenn gives the examples not only of Nazi Germany but also of recent American paranoia concerning immigrants, drugs, and the government, which are often considered outside influences altering an imagined American community.

In his final chapter, “Fascism and the End of Time,” Fenn addresses the American church directly. He points to many examples where fundamentalist ways of thinking about time have entered the American mainstream, with fascist overtones. This way of thinking idealizes an imaginary past, before aliens, gays, minorities, and bureaucracies invaded the community. According to Fenn, the churches are partially responsible for this fascist mind-set in their separation of the “church” from the “world” and in their failure to create a community in which minorities and white Protestant Americans can live together equally. By dividing the “church” from the “world,” one can view those outside of the sacred community as needy and uneducated, and also as polluting.

While much of this book may reflect a dark view of our world, Fenn ends with a view of the individual that gives one hope: “If individuals are to resist the appeal of fascist social movements in the future, they will have to be able to resist these grandiose and narcissist temptations to create a self that is immune to longing, dependency, suffering and death. It is not only a society, seeking to stand the test of time, that becomes host to fascist tendencies. These tendencies, after all, resonate with and seek to mimic the individual’s own longing to transcend the passage of time and to stare unharmed and unpanicked in the face of death.”

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Princeton Theological Seminary

Springsted, Eric O., ed. *Spirituality and Theology: Essays in Honor of Diogenes Allen*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998. Pp. 150. \$17.00.

Spirituality and Theology is a fresh contribution to Christian philosophical theology, and a fitting tribute to the distinguished scholarly ministry of Diogenes Allen, Stuart Professor of Philosophy at Princeton Theological Seminary. Allen trained at Princeton, Yale, and Oxford in the 50s and 60s, the heyday of analytic philosophy, when philosophers typically disdained Christian faith as irrational. In this hostile milieu, Allen published *The Reasonableness of Faith* (1968), arguing that the standard modern parameters of reasonableness should be expanded, and that within properly expanded parameters Christian faith was reasonable. Two decades before postmodernism, Allen advanced a proto-postmodern argument for the reasonableness of Christianity.

Allen realized the collapse of modernity's idolatrous pursuit of a "god's-eye view" meant that the insights of any philosophical inquiry were inextricably linked to the inquirer's perspective. Necessarily, therefore, the spirituality of Christian scholars is intimately related to their theological insights. And insofar as spiritual experience is interpreted and thus contextualized by forces such as language and culture, scholars' theological understandings condition their spirituality. Likewise, the spiritualities of non-Christian scholars condition their understandings of Christianity. Thus, the title, *Spirituality and Theology*, gestures not toward two distinct spheres of scholarly inquiry, but toward lively discussion over the implications of the inescapable interplay between one's spirituality and one's theology.

Due to the powerful sway of modernist epistemology over theology, scholars have only recently engaged debate over this intimate association of spirituality and theology. But its ramifications for Christian reflection are significant. For instance, as Springsted notes, it means Christian philosophers should treat evil not as a problem to resolve outside the confines of specifically Christian convictions—as if it were an obstacle to be overcome *before* exploring the truth of Christianity—but as an issue to address from within Christian understanding. This insight has sparked some of Allen's most creative and controversial explorations (e.g., into the supernatural *use* of suffering). In like fashion, recognition of the interplay between spirituality and theology stimulates the provocative tributes collected in this Festschrift.

The essayists represent an eclectic mix of theological perspectives, but they agree that Allen's distinctive approach is worthy of careful reflection, and all contribute spirited essays. Part I, "Spirituality and the Nature of Theology," focuses on philosophical issues. Stanley Hauerwas traces the modern universi-

ty's marginalization of theological ethics. David Burrell contemplates the nature of discourse among friends, explaining how it constitutes a spiritual exercise. Brian Hebblethwaite argues sharply with Allen's "fideistic" interpretation of Austin Farrer, helpfully representing a dominant critique of Allen found among philosophers who retain modern distinctions between "objective" and "fideistic" ratiocination (categories I consider Allen's expansion of reasonableness to render invalid). Allen is ably defended by his former student and longtime collaborator, Eric Springsted. Springsted focuses upon Pascal, Farrer, and Weil, but the thinking is vintage Allen, and an excellent summary of Allen on faith and reason.

Edward Henderson and Jeffrey Eaton both illustrate the fresh philosophical engagements Allen inspires. Henderson's creative essay brings Athens to Jerusalem by interpreting Socrates within the context of a biblical understanding of faith. Eaton defends talk of spirituality in the face of physicalism/materialism with a vigorous retrieval of Berkeley.

Part II, "Spirituality within Christian Theology," addresses Christian theology and practice. Gerhard Sauter argues that a distinctly Christian hope structures even our most elemental intuitions and thus constitutes a spiritual virtue fundamental to Christian reflection. Daniel Migliore contends Barth's reflections upon praying sparked key insights into the relation between divine sovereignty and human freedom. Elena Malits explains how Allen's nuanced but accessible reflections upon love, marriage, and friendship, and his knack for teasing out theological dimensions in "secular" works, help her engage the hearts and minds of initially disinterested undergraduates. Daniel Hardy turns to the early church to discern how concrete practice of Christian spirituality might help Christians cross theological divides and constructively engage both one another and contemporary society in a common movement toward realization of God's will on earth.

As Allen anticipated, after two centuries of exhausting struggle to defend Christianity from modernist accusations of irrationality, postmodern understandings of reason as "traditioned" open promising new vistas for non-defensive, constructive, Christian philosophical theology. This Festschrift gestures toward what should constitute the substance and style of philosophical theology *after* modernity. It is highly recommended to professors and pastors, and especially for use in "philosophy of religion" courses and advanced church adult education classes.

William Greenway
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Lewis, Nantawan Boonprasat, ed. *Revolution of the Spirit: Ecumenical Theology in Global Context. Essays in Honor of Richard Shaull*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. Pp. 303. \$30.00.

This is a remarkable Festschrift. It is not academic, though there are academic contributions in it. It is rather a collection of sixteen essays that reflect the life experiences, the worldviews, and the passionate concerns of a wide variety of people whose lives Richard Shaull has touched and influenced. Its unifying theme, if any, is perhaps best expressed by the title: *Revolution of the Spirit*. The writers reflect on that revolution, in their own lives, in Latin America, in Korea, China, Kenya, New Zealand, or in late twentieth-century U.S.A. All of them share Shaull's roots in, and protest against, the church and its teachings. Most are trying to find a new way of life and witness where they are. Others write in support of that effort. Some are active reformers in various churches; others in movements outside. Many have formed their own theologies; a few are pure activists. Some wrestle deeply with personal stories, as immigrant, as female, as gay, as former fundamentalist, or, in Mark Taylor's moving description, as Mayan and Christian.

Nor have they all gone in the same direction. One should not read this book with the expectation that it will all come together in a new "ecumenical theology." The "new paradigms" suggested by Timothy Njoya in Kenya, Kim Yong-Bock in Korea, Bruce Boston in Virginia, Richard Snyder in New York, and Joseph Nyce in suburban New Jersey, are hardly coherent with, or even in dialogue with, each other. Nor is there agreement about Christian praxis. Philip Wickeri's China-based pattern of development and inculturation is a world apart from George Armstrong's liturgical crusade against the ruling powers in New Zealand, or Waldo Cesar's measured analysis of Christian social action in Brazil. Two quite different styles of women's spirituality are presented by an Asian American from Thailand, Nantawan Boonprasat Lewis, and a Hispanic American from Guatemala, Maria Marta Aris-Paul. These are only examples. The differences are not only geographical and situational. These are different people, with different experiences of alienation, struggle, and faith. Each contributor tells a story of her or his own. They represent personal, as well as social struggles, not always coherently resolved. The overall impression is of the fascinating diversity that the Christian message can generate among those whose human experiences drive them to rebel against the social structures, including the church structures, and the thought forms, including the doctrines of the church, which dominate and oppress them; and then drive them to seek new forms of church, doctrine, and action to change the world.

This reflects the genius of Dick Shaull's own pilgrimage, his activism, and his teaching method. His restless questioning, his engagement with the world, and his inductive style, express and encourage this ferment. His writings are part of this process. So is his teaching. In this volume his students and his colleagues, who have caught his spirit, express their gratitude to him by reporting where they have been led and what their own hopes are as they participate in the journey.

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Princeton Theological Seminary

Carroll, James R., and John T. Carroll. *Preaching the Hard Sayings of Jesus*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996. Pp. 174. \$14.95.

When one wrestles with the hard sayings of Jesus it is good to have a few friends along to offer counsel. James R. and John T. Carroll should be added to the invitation list. They've added a worthy (and accessible!) contribution to the church's collective wisdom on the difficult sayings of Jesus.

The volume is organized somewhat along the lines of the old *Interpreter's Bible Commentary* where text is followed by exegesis and exposition. John Carroll, an associate professor of New Testament at Union Seminary in Virginia, offers exegetical reflections (including a fresh translation of each text), while his father, James, with over fifty years of pastoral experience, presents homiletical insights in sections called, "From Text to Sermon."

The book also reflects a thematic arrangement: Chapters 1–3 ("The Scandal of Grace," "The Cost of Grace," "The Offense of Judgment") address Jesus' sayings that are difficult, not because they're hard to understand but because they are simply hard to accept. Chapter 4 ("A Jesus Hard to Understand") examines two parables that derive their difficulty primarily from the linguistic and cultural differences that separate the contemporary reader from the ancient setting. And the last chapter ("The Offense of Jesus' Humanity") looks at several texts in which Jesus' response seems all too human. Was he, for example, mistaken about the end of time or frightened by the prospect of death?

The book is reader friendly and could be used as a solid resource for Bible study groups. Interpretive gems are sprinkled throughout the text. And often the Carrolls' interpretive "take" on the hard saying is not what the reader might expect. Indeed, sometimes father and son disagree on the best way through the hermeneutical difficulties. This adds integrity to the interpretive

process (they are *hard* texts!) and serves to stimulate the reader's own thinking.

An unfortunate omission is the lack of any reference to what the ancient wisdom of the church has to offer regarding the hard sayings. The select bibliography appended to the end of the book lists no book written before the twentieth century. Surely Calvin and Luther, Augustine and Chrysostom, have good wisdom on these hard sayings that we would do well to consider.

But these are modest flaws in a gem of a book. Church librarians should find room for this one. Pastors will find themselves coming back to it. One final observation: The obvious affection and esteem between the father and son coauthors (evident from the preface) is a witness to grace. It is a blessing for which every parent prays; and, it is a witness that should not go unmentioned.

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Webb, Stephen H. *The Gifting God: A Trinitarian Ethics of Excess*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Pp. 192. \$35.00.

Webb, associate professor of religion and philosophy at Wabash College, has gifted us with a provocative book on giving. This work is also a splendid example of theology in the key of C, that is, correlation, mustering the resources of a trinitarian theology in response to a persisting philosophical problem, but one that has special immediacy for ecclesiastical life and social policy: clarifying an ethics of giving.

Concerned by the prevalent cultural cynicism over gift giving, the pervasive skepticism that it is ever disinterested, Webb's study first subjects the act and matrix of giving to critical, philosophical analysis. An engagement with important theorists and texts on giving reveals a polarization of models. On the one side (chapter 1) are those theories of gift giving that do not escape the logic of the marketplace (Mauss, Sahlins, Bourdieu, Titmus, Hyde), what Webb calls the *model of exchange*. Giving here is never gratuitous, but always comes with an expectation of return. At its best, this model rightly aims for mutuality and reciprocity—the gift should empower more giving for the common good; its Achilles' heel, however, is that since giving is a calculation, the gift is denuded of its grace and more easily cloaks baneful motives and agendas. On the other side (chapter 2) are those theories that accentuate the extravagance of giving (Emerson, Nietzsche), what Webb calls the *model of*

excess, where giving is wholly gratuitous. While this model preserves the generosity of the gift (can a gift by definition be motivated by expectation of return?), it cannot ensure any mutuality, responsibility, or social inclusion of the recipient. Webb therefore also labels this model “squandering.”

For the proper marriage of these antithetical models, a partnership that preserves the largesse of the act of giving (its excess) together with its ameliorative social effects (exchange), Webb turns in the second half of his study to theological resources. An initial review of important theological statements, however, reveals a similar dichotomy in thinking about the gift/grace nexus (chapter 3). Either God’s generosity is characterized as so overwhelming or sovereign (excessive) that it admits of no real human return—i.e., acts of gratitude born in human freedom (Barth, Calvin)—or the divine-human relationship is portrayed as so mutual and inclusive (exchangeable) that it endangers any initiating grace on God’s part (Hartshorne, McFague, Hodgson).

Webb proposes a trinitarian solution to this dilemma (chapter 4). The human economy of giving finds its exemplary pattern in the economy of the Trinity. In a move reminiscent of Barth’s doctrine, Webb explicates the Trinity as God’s self-donation, disclosing God the Giver, the Given, and the Giving. More than just a model, however, this Trinity is in full historical process: God (the Giver “Father”) gives freely and lavishly, indeed squanders on us both creation and redemption (the Given “Son”), but not without catching us up in the process and compelling us to return the gift by generously giving to others in church and society (the Giving “Spirit”). God’s trinitarian agency is therefore both excessive and exchangeable, satisfying the demands of the gift: “divine excess begets reciprocity . . . God gives excessively . . . as a way of empowering relationships of mutuality and reciprocity.” Think here, for instance, of the covenant. Webb calls this inclusive divine-human process *gifting* as a way to remind us that “the gift precedes and empowers giving, and that giving is always in response to a prior gift.”

Though this book is largely driven by exposition of other positions, including forays into the thickets of deconstructivist Derrida and his theological shadow Taylor, the reader will be rewarded by Webb’s informative exposition, well-punctuated and developed argument, and resulting insights. His concluding proposal is an especially profound and eloquent statement on giving that will stimulate, inspire, and challenge one’s own thinking—and practice.

The major curiosity for me in this work is its lack of an ontological Trinity, since Webb proves himself to be an economic trinitarian (God’s trinitarian

being, or becoming, *is* in God's giving in world-historical process). A fully personal and eternal Trinity who creates *ex nihilo* would seem to me to ground the graced nature of creation and redemption better in the very being of God, who, as Love, could even be characterized as the gifting community par excellence of mutually excessive and reciprocal givers (trinitarian perichoresis). Such a position moreover would not detract from Webb's insightful application of the economy of the Trinity to the realm of human giving.

In any event, we are bound to receive many more gifts from this young scholar of keen ability and rhetorical flair, to which we look forward, and for which we shall also be grateful.

Thomas R. Thompson
Calvin College

Volf, Miroslav. *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996. Pp. 336. \$19.95.

This is one of a mere handful of genuinely significant books in systematic theology from the last decade of the century. It brings together an unusual synthesis of expertise in the technical issues of dogmatic theology with often devastating insight into the practical conflicts of contemporary society. It is not always an easy read. But it amply repays reading and reading again.

Volf sets out from riot and conflict in the 90s—in Los Angeles, in Croatia, in Berlin—and the often wafer-thin barrier between the politics of recognition and the brutalities of tribalism. Somewhere in this mess, God on the cross with outstretched hands points us to a theology of embrace.

In the first main chapter, the tensions, constructive and destructive, between distance and belonging are examined. Suffocating identification and disinterested neglect are always present realities. We must face up to the dynamics of exclusion. A valuable section on the differences between differentiation, exclusion, and judgment leads to analysis of the politics of false purity, the stance of contrived innocence, and the power of violence—Cain and Abel.

Chapter three, in many ways the heart of the book, is a remarkable reflection on embrace. The concept of liberation is full of ambiguity. Love, not freedom, is ultimate, in the Christian dynamic of repentance and forgiveness. Reconciliation involves a kind of forgetting. “The four structural elements in the movement of embrace are opening the arms, waiting, closing the arms, and opening them again. For the embrace to happen, all four must be there and they must follow one another in an unbroken timeline.” Embrace is instantiated in the parable of the prodigal son.

The last chapter deals with the complex issues of gender identity. Half the human race is often treated as inferior and abused. Gender identity is fluid, in contrast to the stable difference of the sexed body, and is theologically understood through a mutuality of self-giving love.

Part two is devoted to the tension between justice and oppression in a pluralist society. It is necessary to affirm basic Christian commitments in culturally situated ways. We can both stand within a given tradition and learn from other traditions. "If you want justice without injustice, you must want love." This leads to the connections between deception and truth. Deception occurs through denying the past. Jesus advocates the power of truth against the power of violence. The truth matters more than my own self, but the self of the other matters more than my truth.

The last chapter covers violence and peace. "Modernity has failed to deliver on the promise of peace." The cross breaks the cycle of violence, laying bare the mechanism of scapegoating. Vengeance can be left to God in the eschaton.

No brief survey can do justice to the innumerable sharp insights and the range of learning that give the argument of the book its characteristic tone of authenticity and clear-eyed realism. There may be points to argue further—does the final note of divine vengeance not rely too heavily on the cultural particularity of the last book of the Bible? But just to raise the question reminds one of the remarkable lucidity of the deployment of biblical material. This book has implications for all Christian social ethics.

George Newlands
University of Glasgow

Vallet, Ronald E. *Congregations at the Crossroads: Remembering to Be Households of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. pp. 256. \$22.00.

The growing anxiety about the future of "mainstream" Protestantism in North America has generated a flurry of publications. This book is yet another effort to address and analyze the current Protestant blues about dwindling congregations. Its author, Ronald Vallet, is president of REV/Rose Ministries, a consulting firm located in upstate New York. He also teaches as an adjunct professor of administration at McMaster Divinity School in Hamilton, Ontario. Vallet has published several other works in the area of congregational stewardship. Issues of giving patterns and money management surface irresistibly on many pages of this monograph. From beginning to end, the author contends that a bona fide effort to recover the vision of the church

as “household of God” will lead to a realignment and rejuvenation of many mainstream Protestant congregations.

Three assumptions drive this book: (1) that God calls each Christian congregation to be a “household of God”; (2) that the major barrier to fulfilling that calling is a debilitating amnesia or loss of memory; and (3) that God can bring about changes and reversals within congregations. At first glance, these claims seem enticing and even reasonable. But they soon become problematic, especially when Vallet equates the current malaise in mainstream congregations with an “amnesia or loss of memory.”

How does the author know that amnesia is *the* debilitating infirmity of contemporary mainstream Protestant congregations? He might be correct but one wishes for some substantiation that identifies amnesia as the real culprit. Other researchers clearly point to other causes for “mainstream maladies.” In *Vanishing Boundaries* (1994) sociologists Dean Hoge, Benton Johnson and Donald Luidens point to large numbers of baby boomers who withdrew from Protestant congregations because they found no credible answers to questions posed by a chaotic, pluralist culture. A group of savvy educators in *Rethinking Christian Education* (1993) edited by David S. Schuller blamed the demise on anemic educational efforts at the congregational level, especially among adults. Moreover, Vallet does not help us to understand *why* this particular malady pervades congregations in North America. Nothing of this ecclesial amnesia—its etiology or symptoms or infectious qualities—is explained. The nature of this amnesia is not very clear, at least to this sympathetic reader and, consequently, I am unsure whether Vallet’s antidote is real medicine or a placebo.

Vallet’s prescription for suffering mainstream churches is straight forward: Ailing congregations need a full dose of the biblical vision of the church as the “household of God.” Chapter 5 outlines the three ingredients of the antidote: it will be built on the resurrection of Jesus; it exists for the sake of God’s mission; and it is to be built around the eucharistic table. One wonders, are these characteristics intended to be a revision of the traditional marks of the true church? However that may be, these three are followed by five household rules that, he claims, are “outcomes of the gospel.” Here are the rules prescribed: Charge no interest to the poor; leave gleanings for the hungry; give the tithe; provide hospitality; and observe the sabbath. Blending these three characteristics and five rules will provide the tonic that contemporary congregations need.

Vallet’s well-intentioned and even passionate book is a sincere effort to provide a remedy. But is repriminating a vision of the “household of God” in contemporary congregations the medicine we are looking for? I think of that

venerable and enduring book, *The Images of the Church in the New Testament*, where Paul Minear illuminates dozens of equally appropriate metaphors to help define the church. Why and on what basis does Vallet privilege the "household of God" metaphor to the exclusion of all other biblical metaphors? And further: Is the metaphor of "household" an appropriate metaphor for congregations in this *fin de siècle* era? The term "household" inevitably conjures up overtones of "family," and I am increasingly hesitant to characterize contemporary congregations as a "family" or even as an "extended family." Families are very hard communities for outsiders to join. In families (households) the kin-folk relationships, roles, and mores are already sealed and defined long before the stranger dares to enter. By nature, families are homogeneous and such close-knittedness seems at odds with the diversity of humans that characterizes the biblical vision of the citizenry of the kingdom of God. Could it be that one of the reasons for the demise of many North American congregations is that they are purposefully designed to be tight-knit, ritual-driven, parochial households? Is it possible that envisioning a congregation according to the metaphor of "household" unwittingly contributes to what sociologists have called the "cocooning" of Protestant congregations? Vallet rightly senses that the kingdom's ethics about money and stewardship are at odds with our consumer-crazed culture. But, since those same kingdom's ethics call for welcoming the stranger and incorporating those who are different, I wonder if Vallet's prevailing and privileged metaphor for the church is not counterproductive.

John W. Stewart
Princeton Theological Seminary

Anderson, Paul N. *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996. Pp. 329. \$25.00.

Paul N. Anderson's book on the *Christology of the Fourth Gospel* provides a significant addition to the many discussions of John's Christology in recent years. Anderson's bibliography of publications concerned with the Christology of this Gospel lists some seventy books and articles that have appeared since 1980 alone. But Anderson's work offers a fresh approach to the subject, and a striking set of conclusions that will stimulate discussion for years to come.

The theme of the monograph is, as the subtitle indicates, an exploration of the unity and disunity of christological affirmations in the Fourth Gospel,

concentrating on a detailed study of the Gospel's sixth chapter. The apparent tension between an exalted Christology in John that insists on the equality, or even oneness, of the Son with the Father ("the Father and I are one," 10:30), and a subordinationist Christology in the same gospel ("the Father is greater than I," 14:28), has been frequently studied since Ernst Käsemann brought the issue into sharp focus. Anderson's book offers us a new and thorough approach to the understanding of this primary problem of John's Christology.

The Christology of the Fourth Gospel contains three parts: Part I offers a survey of the main methods that were applied to the study of John's Christology in the Gospel as a whole, and, particularly, in chapter six. Part II discusses in detail methodological questions related to the tension of unity and disunity as they are posed in John. Part III gives a thorough exegetical treatment of the whole of chapter six understood as three levels of dialogue: the evangelist's dialogue with the previous tradition (6:1-24); the dialogue with the audience (6:25-66); and the dialogue with the social and religious environment at the evangelist's time (6:67-71). Eight very helpful appendices are added; a thorough bibliography is divided into five subsections, and, an index on references, names, and themes completes the book.

The outstanding characteristic of Anderson's work is its synthetic quality. This strength of the book is shown in several different ways. First, the monograph has an unusually wide international horizon. It grew out of a doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Glasgow, deepened by research work done in Tübingen and in several locations in England, and completed in the U.S.A. As a consequence, Anderson's book combines the best efforts of scholars in different countries in a most illuminating manner. Second, Anderson is sensitive to the interplay between types of criticism, exegetical detail, and theological interpretation. Especially his evaluation of Rudolf Bultmann's work on John shows the constant awareness of the mutual dependence of source-critical analysis, of the reconstruction of distinct Christologies in the Gospel, and of the theological orientation of the modern interpreter. Anderson's own approach is disciplined by his careful effort to synthesize methodological, historical, and theological aspects of the exegete's task. Third, Anderson's study seeks to build a bridge between the interpretation of an ancient text and modern cognitive and epistemological studies. To that end, two contemporary proposals for the theory of knowing and believing are drawn into the argument of the work: Fowler's theory of the five stages of cognitive maturation and Loder's identification of the path of knowing as a series of five steps in a transforming event. Anderson hopes that this applica-

tion of modern cognitive theory might help to elucidate the “cognitive and epistemological origins of theological motifs” that are at work in the unity and disunity of John’s Christology. Fourth, Anderson’s thesis is itself synthetic. He advances an understanding of the Fourth Gospel, in adopting a previous proposal by C. K. Barrett, that the evangelist is a dialectical thinker who “appears to be continuously groping for new ways to articulate the truth which has been glimpsed through his spiritual encounter with Jesus.”

Ulrich W. Mauser
Princeton Theological Seminary

Harris, Maria, and Gabriel Moran. *Reshaping Religious Education: Conversations on Contemporary Practice*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998. Pp. 202. \$18.00.

Maria Harris has been pushing boundaries for most of her career as a religious educator, and this book is no exception. Along with her coauthor and conversation partner, noted philosopher of religious education Gabriel Moran, Harris sets out to extend and redefine the parameters of beleaguered theological discipline. In this book, as elsewhere, Harris “bungee jumps” into under-explored curriculum issues by holding fast to images of liberation and liturgical tradition. With Moran, Harris adds the intriguing elements of interfaith and international conversation (with Jewish educator Sherry Blumberg and German educator Friedrich Schweitzer, respectively) about the future of religious education in the global context of the twenty-first century.

Written as a conversation between Harris and Moran, this book offers an imaginative and sometimes jolting treatment of some of religious education’s most enduring themes, including educational foundations and catechesis, development, spirituality, and ecumenical, interfaith dialogue with what Harris and Moran call “the wider world.” In a surprising treatment of catechesis, for instance, Harris calls the teaching ministry to embrace death as well as life. Catechists are witnesses, people called to continuing and deepening embodiment of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. “To teach people to practice a religious way of life, and to teach people to understand religion,” contends Harris, “. . . means showing people how to live and how to die by embodying this religious ‘way’ through a set of beliefs, symbols, and actions. These in turn connect people to the enduring religious questions: From where do I come? Where am I going? And why?” With grace and candor, she invites struggling churches to ask openly, “What is dying?”—and

offers as examples the death of structures, the death of assumed privilege, and the real deaths of people lost to poverty, disease, and suffering. Indeed, she notes, the role of the catechist-as-witness may even spill over into the role of the martyr.

No less startling is Harris and Moran's treatment of development as an economic construct. Dismissing "postmodern" as an "unintelligible term," Moran challenges religious educators to rid themselves of sweeping growth metaphors and the assumption that "stages" function as successive improvements. Argues Moran: "Developmental theories that profess to retain an openness to novelty either have to accept death as a stage of development or else close down development for the sake of illusory attachments. This is why religious development is not one more theory of development but is rather the *precondition* of development in economics, social science, morality, or psychology." Religion, in fact, is the very force that keeps us from idolizing development at the expense of those we consider as less evolved. Since the divine economy is a just household, religious educators must attend to the care of house and (especially) home, and to that end engage passionately in ecological stewardship, simplicity, and economic justice.

More predictable are welcome discussions of gender issues, justice, and jubilee for religious education. Helpful, too, is their treatment of contemporary spirituality, an acknowledged nod toward popular interest, but Harris and Moran quickly rescue the term from trendiness by anchoring it in Christian history. Harris's three sets of spiritual disciplines (one set emphasizing individual interiority, another stressing group ritual, a third integrating the other two) seem rather "neat" for direct translation into educational practice. Still, this section illustrates Harris's commitment—in this book as elsewhere—to the liturgical practices of the faith community to form the backbone of Christian curriculum.

Harris and Moran have provided an admirable example of practical reflection that knits together both ecclesial hindsight and foresight. Anchored in the tradition of the church—and specifically the tradition of Roman Catholicism—they find the security to leap out into the chasms of Christian education, explicitly tackling subjects from the shadows of the discipline. What merits more explicit consideration in this book is God's side of the equation in religious education. Is the catechist/witness the real educator in the community, or is the Holy Spirit? In what way is God at work in and through the practices of faith? Spiritual disciplines (including those devoted to justice and jubilee) are not merely bearers of symbols and traditions, habits by which the

church is defined, or vehicles through which the work of the church is accomplished, although they are these as well. Most of all, Christian practices are sacramental acts in which the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are rendered present with us, and through which the Holy Spirit transforms us into the persons and communities God created us to be.

Kenda Creasy Dean
Princeton Theological Seminary

Schmitz-Moormann, Karl, with James F. Salmon. *Theology of Creation in an Evolutionary World*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1997. Pp. 205. \$18.95.

Is it possible to interpret evolution as a meaningful, directed process? Has the universe transcended its material nature through the evolutionary development of the human spirit? In this posthumously published book, Roman Catholic theologian Karl Schmitz-Moormann struggles with these questions as he draws deeply from the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin to present a theological interpretation of evolution. Writing for college and seminary students, as well as adult study groups, Schmitz-Moormann brings together a large amount of scientific material in an effort to glean from the details of the evolutionary process a renewed understanding of God's intention for creation. An appendix of helpful study questions for each chapter is included. Jesuit chemist James F. Salmon worked collaboratively on this project, which he and Schmitz-Moormann's wife, Nicole, completed after Schmitz-Moormann's untimely death in 1996.

The book begins with a discussion of theological method in which Schmitz-Moormann argues that a theology truly informed by evolutionary themes must not cling to earlier forms of truth but instead seek after the most recent ones. This gives the biblical text and the deposit of faith a provisional character for Schmitz-Moormann and reveals a tension in his thought that is evident throughout the book: although new truth rarely shines brilliantly, tentatively stated doctrine cannot adequately support the Christian life. While he does set limits to the historical relativism fostered by this evolutionary approach to theology, his greater concern is for the church to open itself to theological innovation. In light of the ongoing controversy surrounding evolution, it is important to note that Schmitz-Moormann accepts the "fact" of evolution, engaging neither in the debate between Neodarwinism and creation-science nor in the strictly intra-scientific discussion of possible modifications to Neodarwinism.

In the central chapters, Schmitz-Moormann develops his interpretation of the meaning of evolution through an examination of evolutionary trends. Using the parameters of union, consciousness, information, and freedom, he discerns in evolution a propensity toward complexity at ever higher levels. This leads him to deny the claim that human life is statistically insignificant in the visible universe. He argues instead that one can see in humanity the result of God's sustained call to the universe for increased participation in the divine self through its encounter with the Creator. The parameters of union, consciousness, information, and freedom thus reveal the human to be at the center of God's intention for creation.

There is much to value in Schmitz-Moormann's book. He acknowledges his indebtedness to Teilhard's work, which among less sympathetic readers tends to be perceived as more poetic than scientific or theological, and he has gone to some length to strengthen and update Teilhard's approach with well-documented scientific and theological sections.

A major criticism of Schmitz-Moormann's approach has to do with his reliance on parameters he takes to be definitive for human experience. He uses these to establish that evolutionary change is oriented toward the existence of persons. However, since he brings them *to* his analysis from philosophy and theology, it would appear to weaken his claim to have uncovered the significance of human experience in the universe *from* an analysis of evolution. He does recognize this difficulty and responds with the assertion that using the human species as the key to the meaning of evolution is appropriate because humans can objectively be considered the latest, and therefore the most representative, product of evolution.

One of the most intriguing questions raised by the book is how a more traditional view of the person and work of Christ might be informed by Schmitz-Moormann's evolutionary theology. Although he affirms that the incarnate Logos pays the price for human freedom by accepting the evil of death on a cross, he does not explain why the Logos would need to pay this price in a world where human freedom is connected to the history of life on earth and to the evolving matrix out of which *homo sapiens* arose—all of which is part of God's ongoing creative work. Sadly, he was only able to footnote his desire to integrate his christological and soteriological thoughts into his evolutionary theology. This task remains for those who, like Schmitz-Moormann, are convinced that theology must take seriously the details of the evolving world in which we live.

Kirk Wegter-McNelly
Graduate Theological Union

Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997. Pp. 148. \$14.00.

Jürgen Moltmann is now emeritus professor of systematic theology on the Protestant Faculty of the University of Tübingen. For over thirty years he has poured forth the wisdom God has given him. This small book of lectures, with some material excerpted from his earlier book *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (1992) but in a simpler form, contains direct and bold convictions about the Spirit and our life in the Spirit. Beginning with his own conversion, Moltmann consistently fuses a vital personal faith with admirable learning.

In the first chapter, he tells how, as a prisoner of war in Britain, he "struggled with the angel" and came to know God. I hope it will lead other scholars to share encounters they also have had with the Spirit because it assists the audience to position their work in the faith community, not just in the academy. In subsequent chapters, what comes out forcefully is Moltmann's conviction that the Spirit is one who renews life in all its aspects, not only in a narrow religious way. Through the Spirit, we embrace the presence of God and also enter into community with other people and all living things.

Moltmann flatly states his belief that the gift of the Spirit is the greatest and most wonderful thing we can experience because it is the very God, the creative and life-giving, redeeming and saving God, who is present to us. In the Spirit, God is present in a special way, and we experience whole, full, healed, and redeemed life with all of our senses. With Pope John Paul II, Moltmann contrasts the culture of life in the gospel with today's culture of death. He presents a grand vision of the Christian mission as wonderfully life-giving, both before as well as after death. He sees the sending of the Spirit as the revelation of God's indestructible affirmation of life in all its dimensions.

In Moltmann's view, Jesus did not bring a new religion into the world. What he brought was new life. God wants to renew the community and the face of the earth and all things living. This is why, when the Spirit of Jesus is present, the sick are healed, sad people are comforted, the marginalized are accepted, and the demons of death are driven away. This kind of broad mission does not have to alienate nonChristians because it invites them to celebrate God's promise to renew all things.

This book presents Moltmann at his best, and it is guaranteed to lift your drooping soul. What begins with a testimony ends with a prayer. It is the kind of stirring theology of the Spirit that actually fosters experiences of the Spirit

in one's own life. Moltmann's book may just be good enough to renew all of us—mainliners, evangelicals, and pentecostals alike.

Clark H. Pinnock
McMaster Divinity College

Ashby, Godfrey. *Go Out and Meet God: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. Pp. 146. \$16.00.

This most recent offering in the International Theological Commentary Series makes an excellent addition to a project designed for ministers and Christian educators, which seeks to go “beyond the usual critical-historical approach to the Bible and [offer] a *theological* interpretation of the Hebrew text.” Godfrey Ashby, a former Old Testament professor and now retired assistant bishop (Anglican) of George, South Africa, writes with an awareness of the pastor’s need to develop homiletical applications that are based with integrity upon a critical, exegetical discussion of the text. Given Ashby’s disclaimer that he pays more attention to the “living tradition that produced the book called Exodus” than to “literary criticism and theories about sources,” I was surprised by the way he effortlessly weaves numerous historical-critical insights into the theological fabric of his commentary. Almost every page offers some example of linguistic, archaeological, geographical, or historical information helpful to illuminating the text. Moreover, several “illustrations” from literature and history (e.g., Tolstoy, Solzhenitzen, Tolkien, Shaw, Gutiérrez) provide the preacher and teacher with fresh material. For all of this, the book is still rightly termed a commentary because at every point Ashby’s discussion is tied to the content and movement of the text.

The book is organized into thirteen chapters, each with a two-to-three page overview of introductory matters followed by comments on individual verses or sections of text. This format does not necessarily lend itself to equal treatment of every passage; there is almost as much comment on Exodus 6:3 (the revelation of Yahweh’s name to Moses) as on all of chapters 35–40! But since some material calls for extensive theological discussion, it is appropriate that the longest chapter of the commentary treats the revelation at Sinai and the giving of the Ten Commandments (19:1–20:21).

The theological emphasis of the text surfaces in at least two ways. First, Ashby often follows his technical discussion of a passage with a brief comment on what the verses say about God and God’s relationship with Israel. For example, at 3:7–12, where Yahweh offers Moses a rationale for redemption, Ashby notes: “The Exodus story will not simply *describe* an act of liberation,

but set forth a *theology* of liberation. Here we are shown that since God *is*, his promises must be believed and God himself worshipped." Closely related to these broader observations are a second, more specific type of comment about theological problems raised within the text. On the difficult question of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, Ashby writes, "Many people have been worried about Pharaoh's apparent lack of options. . . . The blunt truth is that the book of Exodus is not concerned with Pharaoh and his options but with Yahweh and his plan for the Hebrews."

Ashby knows that there is much legal and liturgical material in the book of Exodus that falls on deaf ears today. His chapter entitled "The Alternative Society: Exodus 20:22–23:19" speaks with passion about the integral connection between faith and life. With a clear, yet careful, discussion of the sacrificial laws, he eloquently captures the mood of texts many Christians would pass by on their way from the Ten Commandments to the story of the golden calf: "Far from being a wearisome set of petty rubrics drawn up by some liturgist, these chapters in Exodus (25–31) present the score of a glorious symphony of sacrifice offered to the mighty God."

Bishop Ashby reflects on the issues of slavery, liberation, apartheid, and social justice out of a deep well of experience in a country whose history has provided both a context for this message and a crucible of suffering to refine both preacher and hearer. I heartily recommend his work.

James K. Mead
Princeton Theological Seminary

Cosgrove, Charles H. *Elusive Israel: The Puzzle of Election in Romans*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997. Pp. 146. \$16.00.

In *Elusive Israel*, Cosgrove addresses three central concerns involved in the interpretation of the book of Romans—the identity of Israel, the fate of Israel, and God's impartial justice. The ambiguity about Israel's identity and fate appears most clearly in Romans 9 and 11, where Paul writes that "not all Israelites truly belong to Israel" (9:6) and that "all Israel will be saved" (11:26). The further question follows: How can we affirm both God's impartial justice toward all, as emphasized in the early chapters of Romans, and God's election of the Jewish people, as emphasized in the later chapters? These questions lead Cosgrove into a discussion of the process, context, and purpose of interpretation itself. What do we do if there is more than one plausible reading? To what extent is interpretation an ethical act involving the will of the interpreter? This book keeps its focus in two places at once, for it is

more broadly an argument about interpretation and more specifically an argument about the interpretation of Israel in Romans. Cosgrove does us a great service by raising these issues. In the post-Holocaust world, Christians must continue to wrestle with the traditions of biblical interpretation that produced hatred and persecution of the Jews. Any attempt to open our eyes to the importance of Israel for Christian theology is certainly welcome.

Cosgrove relies heavily on rhetorical criticism and canonical criticism to explore the ambiguities of Paul's argument. He maintains that Paul uses the rhetorical devise of "co-deliberation," making the readers co-responsible for the meaning of the text by drawing us into the deliberations about Israel's identity and fate. Further, he argues that through the process of being gathered into the Christian canon, Paul's apocalyptic certainty about the overcoming of "carnal Israel" has been relativized by the broader canonical witness and thereby transformed into a prophetically provisional word. Thus, Cosgrove argues that Romans does not foreclose the possibility of Israel's rejection or of Israel's salvation; rather, Romans invites the readers to answer this question for themselves.

Cosgrove seeks a path between the twin dangers of a reading that closes off fresh interpretation by a flat appeal to authorial intention and a reading that has no closure (and thus no usefulness) because it dissipates into an infinitude of interpretive possibilities. He argues, rather, that any text sets forth a range of plausible interpretations. Which interpretation is chosen will depend on the context and purpose of the interpreter. Because there is a moment of will, that is, a moment of choosing, interpretation becomes an ethical act and should be guided by proper ethical standards. Cosgrove appeals to the commandment to love one's neighbor as a guideline for an ethic of interpretation. When a text presents ambiguity and invites the reader into co-deliberation, as does Romans, then our interpretive choices must be made in such a way that they maximize love of neighbor. This, then, provides the warrant for Cosgrove's reading Paul as affirming not only the salvation of all Israel, but the salvation of all people.

While the goal of this book is laudable, to give a reading of Romans that will affirm the ongoing significance of the Jews and thus reduce Christian triumphalism, the argument is carried out in a way that finally undermines itself. First, Cosgrove's choice of the love command as an interpretive trump card is not sufficiently defended. Not only is it debatable whether love truly constitutes a focal point of the New Testament's moral vision, but in Cosgrove's hands love is reduced to modern liberal sentimentality. Rather than being defined by the self-giving of Christ on the cross, love is equated

with "humane purposes," "respect for the dignity of all peoples and individuals," and "the Western tradition of human rights and egalitarianism." These principles, in turn, drive Cosgrove toward a universalism that relativizes Israel's election and thus fails to do justice to Israel's calling. He writes, "the only way to resolve the tension between divine impartiality toward all human beings and the special election of Israel is to infer that, with God, *every people has the right to be Israel.*" However, by making *every* nation elect, Cosgrove diminishes the significance of Israel's election and conjures the specter of nationalistic claims to divine prerogative such as were used to underwrite Western imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Certainly Cosgrove has no intention of justifying such imperialistic appeals to divine favor, and his careful reading of Romans is in many ways to be commended. But when he makes the leap from neighbor love to "*every people has the right to be Israel,*" he shows his project to be underwritten by a liberalism that finally subverts his attempt to restore the people of Israel to their central place in the divine economy.

Scott Bader-Saye
University of Scranton

Parker, David C. *The Living Text of the Gospels*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Pp. 224. \$54.95/\$17.95.

The work of the textual critic, the author argues, is broader than the attempt to find the original text amid the variant readings presented in manuscripts that differ in wording from one to another; it involves also tracing the manner in which the early church passed down its traditions. In this sense one lays bare, not a standard authentic version, but a "living text."

Parker, who is a lecturer in New Testament at the University of Birmingham, tests this approach in successive chapters that deal with the different traditions of the Lord's Prayer, the sayings of Jesus on marriage and divorce, the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53-8:11), several minor agreements between Matthew and Luke where they differ from Mark, the endings of the Gospel of Mark, "orthodox corruptions" in Luke 22-24, and finally, the development and transmission of the Fourth Gospel, in which according to Parker, "the distinction between literary and textual reconstructions is artificial."

In the concluding chapter, Parker observes that the written tradition is always accompanied by an oral tradition, in which we continue to be influenced by our knowledge of variant readings, the wording of which we may, on

critical grounds, be inclined to reject. "It may seem," Parker writes, "that the argument is moving towards the conclusion that the quest for the earliest forms is worthless. But it is not, because the quest to recover early text forms is a necessary part of the reconstruction of the history of the text. . . ."

Throughout the discussion, the author reiterates the importance of taking account of the physical characteristics of manuscripts, in contrast to those of an invariant and therefore seemingly authoritative printed book. Before the invention of printing, the text (or better, "the tradition of the deeds and sayings of Jesus") was "free" or "living"—though the great ecclesiastical sees attempted to standardize the text from the fourth century onward. At the same time, despite small differences in wording among the handwritten copies, churches and individuals have rightly accepted them as the written Word of God.

Bruce M. Metzger
Princeton Theological Seminary

Keener, Craig S. *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997. Pp. 282. \$24.95.

In this detailed historical study on the Spirit, Craig Keener (Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary) sets out to trace two early Jewish understandings of the Spirit's work—purification and prophecy—in the Gospels and Acts, and to show how these two strands were taken over and adapted by the early Christians.

After surveying the differing understandings of the Spirit in early non-canonical Jewish literature, Keener carefully exegetes several sample texts on the Spirit in the Gospels and Acts, comparing them with early Jewish literature. His conclusions: (1) Mark proclaims Jesus as the eschatological Spirit-bringer, and sees him as the model for the Spirit-baptized life; the Spirit empowers Jesus' followers for mission, for suffering, and for conflict with the forces of Satan. (2) Matthew emphasizes the role of the miracle-working Spirit in distinguishing Jesus and his followers as *true* servants of God and not the Devil's deceivers. (3) John highlights the purifying role of the Spirit, and contrasts the *true* purification available in Jesus through the Spirit with traditional Jewish rituals involving water. (4) Luke's account of Pentecost in Acts focuses on the Spirit as divine empowerment of God's people for prophetic witness, and provides evidence that Jesus is indeed the eschatological Messiah and Lord.

Keener observes that, despite the differing emphases of the early Christian writers, there are two common features: (1) The portrayal of the Spirit's activity often reflects the writer's polemical or apologetic concern and the

hostile situation facing the early Christians. (2) The true Spirit always points to Jesus. In general, it is clear that the all-pervasive emphasis on the Spirit's active working clearly set the early Christian community apart as "different" from Judaism. The Christian emphasis on the indwelling Spirit as mediating God's (and Christ's) presence and moral character in the individual believer, especially, was unique. This charismatic, Spirit-centered character of the early Christians clearly marked them as the community of the new age, those who had begun to experience the radical new power of the eschatological kingdom.

Overall, this book is a mine of information on the Jewish background of these New Testament texts on the Spirit; as the back cover states, it is "perhaps the most detailed study of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels and Acts in light of the ancient evidence of the religious world in which these texts emerged." In addition, the book carefully draws out the significance of references to the Spirit in the Gospels and Acts for the early Christians—and by implication, for serious followers of Jesus today.

Unhappily, the general reader will find this book tough slogging: much of the writing is technical and reads like a doctoral dissertation. The actual text comprises only 40% of the book; much of the rest is devoted to the numerous endnotes. Keener's book provides not so much a broad-ranging summary of the Spirit in the Gospels and Acts, as a detailed exegetical study of a few texts in particular. (Keener focuses on Mark 1; Matthew 3–4, 12; the water/Spirit texts in John; and Acts 2.) In addition, given the author's focus on Jewish *non-canonical* literature, at least some readers will wish he had provided a brief summary of the Spirit in the Old Testament, for the sake of comparison—and perhaps a brief comparison with the rest of the New Testament as well.

Keener, who speaks of himself as a "person of the Spirit," expresses the hope that this book will underscore the thoroughly charismatic nature of the early Christians, promote dialogue between charismatic and non-charismatic Christians, and encourage Christians to "appropriate the NT model and become more Spirit-empowered in their life and ministry."

Roger Mohrlang
Whitworth College

Wentz, Richard E. *John Williamson Nevin: American Theologian*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. Pp. 169. \$35.00.

John W. Nevin (1803–1886) and Philip Schaff (1819–93) are known as the leaders of the Mercersburg Movement, a nineteenth-century theological renaissance in the German Reformed Church. Centered in the denomina-

tion's theological seminary in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, where both Nevin and Schaff taught, the movement has been the subject of significant inquiry at least since James Hastings Nichols' pathbreaking *Romanticism in American Theology: Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg* (1961). Scholarly interest in the movement has subsequently deepened with the publication of several collections of the works of the Mercersburg theologians and a biography of Schaff. Moreover, surveys of Protestant thought by Sydney E. Ahlstrom, Brian Gerrish, and Claude Welch have devoted close and appreciative attention to Nevin and Schaff. Since the mid-1980s, the Mercersburg Society has promoted the study of the movement. Yet despite the attention, there is a measure of justice in Richard Wentz's portrayal of "John Nevin as a much neglected thinker." The focus of scholarship has been on Schaff more than Nevin, and the historical interest in Mercersburg has never come close to rivaling the attention devoted to nineteenth-century Protestant movements such as Transcendentalism.

How, then, does Wentz increase our understanding of John Williamson Nevin? The answer does not lie in the presentation of new information about Nevin's life and thought. In fact, Nichols' *Romanticism in American Theology*, offering greater detail and more extensive documentation, provides a more substantial history of Nevin and Mercersburg than does Wentz. Moreover, many of the theological concerns of Wentz's Nevin will be entirely familiar to those who have read the older literature: a critique of the nineteenth century's revivalistic evangelicalism, an abhorrence of the "sect system" in American Protestantism, a deep appreciation of the whole of the Christian tradition, a desire for the manifestation of a Christianity at once Reformed and Catholic, and a historical sense rare among his contemporaries. But Wentz frames these familiar aspects of Nevin's thought in a new way. Unlike Nichols and others who see the Mercersburg theologian as an exemplar of romanticism, Wentz argues that he was primarily a public theologian deeply engaged with major issues in American religion, culture, and society. Moreover, Wentz depicts a Nevin who is surprisingly relevant to the concerns of what many call a postmodern world. Nevin understood theology, says Wentz, in a way very different from his contemporaries. While they tended to view the discipline as either a fixed system of thought or as a gloss upon individual religious experience, he understood theology to express the mystical union of Christ and viewed the church as a union realized within the world and within history. Because of his understanding of its nature, theology for him was always directed to specific public circumstances and issues. It was, like the Heidelberg Cathechism that he praised, inherently dialogical, correlating question

and answer. Moreover, Nevin's theology was less interested in resolving metaphysical questions than in affirming the mystery out of which such conundrums arose. Nevin's theology was also dynamic and open-ended, for it saw history as the arena in which Christianity expressed "the universal *in our midst*, already present, but judging and beckoning us" to a more thorough manifestation of that universality.

So interpreted, Nevin's theology has points of contact, Wentz tells us, with Buddhist notions of the self, with Victor Turner's ideas of *communitas*, with Teilhard de Chardin's concept of a cosmic convergence, and with current conversations about the problem of finding universals in an age of pluralism. Far from being a curmudgeon or misfit on the American theological scene, Wentz's Nevin addressed the most significant issues of his age and of ours. To make these claims, Wentz often has to admit that he is pushing Nevin's thought further along its logical trajectory than the Mercersburg theologian himself was prepared to go. Moreover, Wentz's comparisons of Nevin to contemporary thinkers are difficult to evaluate, for they are often tossed out in passing rather than systematically adumbrated. Yet Wentz, even if he does not make his case definitively, offers at least enough to make it a plausible one. Those who think they know all about John Nevin and have him tucked away in the appropriate nineteenth-century pigeonhole would do well to have a second look and to read this thoughtful, provocative book.

James H. Moorhead
Princeton Theological Seminary

Graves, Mike. *The Sermon as Symphony: Preaching the Literary Forms of the New Testament*. Valley Forge: Judson, 1997. Pp. 288. \$18.00.

In the last twenty years, the largest energy field in preaching has formed around the possibility that the form and function of a biblical text can shape preaching from that text. Mike Graves, associate professor of homiletics at Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, gives us one of the most detailed considerations of that possibility with respect to the literature of the Second Testament.

When comparing this approach to preaching to a symphony, the author does not mean that each sermon should have three parts that correspond to the three parts of the classical symphony. Rather, Graves proposes three movements that correspond to three over-arching considerations in regard to conceptualizing form-sensitive preaching and to developing sermons in this vein. The first movement is to recognize text and tune, that is, to develop a

perspective on preaching that recognizes the relationship between what a text says and the way it says it, and the congruent implications for preaching. The second movement is to listen to the music of the text itself. The preacher listens to the particular ways in which a particular text is developed (genre, form, and literary/rhetorical device). The third movement shifts from the single sermon to the seasons of preaching. Across the year, the preacher seeks four-part harmony, that is, different approaches to preaching from week to week that together witness to the fullness of the gospel. The preacher should not idolize form-sensitive sermons, but use that approach when it is harmonious with the text and occasion.

Graves then devotes one chapter each to the following forms: parables, aphorisms, pronouncement stories, miracle stories, Johannine discourses, adventure narratives, lists of virtues and vices, admonitions and *topoi* (independent discussions), poetry and hymns and apocalypses. The author does not discuss all possible forms in the Second Testament, but the creative reader can move from these case studies to forms of literature that the author does not discuss.

Each chapter follows the same structure. What is the text saying? What is the text doing? How can the sermon say and do the same? Sermonic mood. Sermonic movement. Each chapter includes a sermon by a talented preacher that illustrates form-sensitive preaching. At the end of each chapter, Graves also provides a short bibliography of other sermons that demonstrate this homiletical program.

Graves typically *assumes* that all texts are appropriate to the news of God's unconditional love for all and God's will for justice for all. However, some texts appear to contradict these basic Christian convictions. The author also suggests that the goal of form-sensitive preaching is more to create an experience than to deal with a proposition. Some texts, however, are distinctly propositional (for example, the diatribe), and would call forth a form-sensitive sermon that is propositional. A sustained theological discussion of such issues would strengthen the book.

However, these questions and issues do not detract from the practical, substantial help that this book can provide a preacher. Indeed, the preacher who implements Graves' suggestions will likely hear the fuller music of God in the sanctuary.

Ronald J. Allen
Christian Theological Seminary

Hawkins, Thomas R. *The Learning Congregation: A New Vision of Leadership*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997. Pp. 160. \$14.00.

In this latest addition to his impressive list of titles in areas such as spiritual formation and church organizational helps, the author, formerly of the McCormick Seminary staff and now director of off-campus programs at Eastern Illinois University, lifts the challenge of a rapidly changing world culture for the church.

In Part 1 "Ministry and the Speed of Change," he suggests that the church will be able to meet the challenge only if 1) congregations become learning communities in a way not currently characteristic of their life style; and 2) those in leadership develop the vision, ability, and commitment to helping congregations become such communities. He goes beyond the idea that Christian education is important. He wants churches to become able and committed to learning from their life in ministry and mission. This makes of the congregations communities engaged in what some would recognize as practical theology.

He brings to the attention of the reader the insights of many administrative and education gurus of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. He quotes liberally from these sources, bringing either reminders or fresh insights from their various points of view. Those who have surveyed this literature from time to time know that the changes in administrative models are more rapid than those besetting computer chips so that having the latest key is a daunting task.

The book has a glossary that helps with some of the technical terminology, but readers will want to develop their own list as the glossary is not exhaustive and the terminology flows copiously. That feature and the "how to" flavor of Part 2 "Leading the Learning Congregation," will invite the reader to a careful reading of the book. Pastors and Christian educators will find the book challenging.

Donald B. Rogers
United Theological Seminary
Dayton, OH

Kornfeld, Margaret Zipse. *Cultivating Wholeness: A Guide to Care and Counseling in Faith Communities*. New York: Continuum, 1998. Pp. 375. \$29.95.

Margaret Zipse Kornfeld has written a helpful book for pastors, counselors, and interested laity on their role in faith communities. Commissioned by the Blanton-Peale Institute, this book is a cogent distillation of her thirty years as

a pastoral psychotherapist. A faculty member at both the Blanton-Peale Graduate Institute and Union Theological Seminary in New York, she serves on the Board of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors and, as an ordained Baptist minister, is active in the Judson Memorial Church in New York City.

Not an abstract treatise on psychiatric theory, *Cultivating Wholeness* is written for those in the helping professions. Realizing a change is happening in medicine, she notes that the body and mind are not separate entities. Her holistic approach is the underlining presupposition of her book. The shift is not new, as Jesus called for the same. "Seeing life through Jesus' eyes caused *everything* to look new." Health happens when wholeness is reality. Adapting to life's situations is only the first step, Kornfeld observes. Health is truly possible as a radical second change occurs, when "the whole constellation of beliefs, attitudes and actions are altered because of a new perception of reality."

Using the metaphor of the garden, Kornfeld interprets the soil as the community and the gardener as the facilitator for growth as both essential for health. The community in which the gardeners toil is critical. It is "the 'medicine' our society needs." Religious communities are prime examples of community. For Christians, community is perceived as 'the body of Christ', a living organism, like the garden, in the world. They can be either destructive or positive if they are "safe, inclusive and just."

Kornfeld gives attention to the gardener providing extended help in perfecting skills. The heart of Kornfeld's methodology centers on "the solution-focused method." Keeping in mind the two stages of change, the counselor moves with the client who has already begun the process by seeking help from problem solving to solution building. The client discovers "a new place." Devoting chapters to more specific problems counselors encounter, the author offers helpful insights and procedures. As she concludes her study, she turns to the needs of the counselor so that balance is maintained and burnout is avoided.

Her book can be helpful to any engaged in ministry. A careful read provides coverage of the broad scope of daily concerns. It will be a book you will pull off the shelf many times for additional reference. Summaries of important concepts are sprinkled throughout the chapters, each chapter concludes with additional resources. Appendices provide helpful forms and succinct charts to summarize life-development stages.

With many self-help books full of "new age" methodologies on the market, this book provides a sound antidote for some of the more superficial and

popular approaches. Any who recognize the genuine desire many have for a more spiritual grounding in their lives, and concern for health, either personally or professionally, will be thankful to Margaret Kornfeld for her research and insights.

David Denison Cockcroft
Bronx, NY

Farris, Stephen. *Preaching That Matters: The Bible and Our Lives*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998. Pp. 165. \$17.00.

The writing of books on preaching appears to have come of age and the wide variety of titles and research specialists of stature is encouraging. In the past, the focus was chiefly on the making of the sermon. In succeeding generations, however, the nature and subject of preaching have been picked up by both preachers and diverse scholars whose writings embrace the relationships between preaching and worship, preaching and the allied disciplines of biblical exegesis and exposition, the resources of great literature, the role of the listeners (the congregation), and the attendant factors involving human personality, communication, therapeutic benefits, and sociological considerations.

Among most recent titles is this monograph under the attractive caption, *Preaching That Matters*, by Stephen Farris, a Canadian Presbyterian and member of the teaching faculty of Knox College, Toronto, and at one time a parish minister of that denomination. This book is a comprehensive discussion of the homiletical discipline. One comes away from these chapters with a positive reaction to the author's conviction that preaching matters.

From two perspectives in particular, this book commends itself. First, the author's approach arises from a clear practical theology of preaching. Among its many positive emphases is the stress he lays upon a theology of the Word as a necessary qualification for any adequate interpretation of it. "The insistence of Calvin," he writes, "that it is God's own spirit that enables us to hear God's word in Scripture is, however, needed even more now than in the sixteenth century." On this point, Farris is an informed writer and is sensitive to the necessary factors in the matter of interpretation such as encounter, understanding, and especially of the Word as revelation.

Second, this book is a teaching volume. For the author the pulpit is a calling, a *raison d'être* not generally heard today. He addresses the "already ordained" indirectly through a paradigm of the model preacher who through study habits and personal discipline exercises the varied dimensions of minis-

try. Every contemporary preacher ought to be realistic about what people ought to hear and what is the most effective method to move them to do it. He or she must be aware of the context to which the sermon is addressed, for what impacts a metropolitan city may be wasted effort in a village or small town. Moreover, the two sermons he includes demonstrate "the art of discards," which is the ability to include only what is necessary—not one word more.

It must be added that this volume is also a *work* book, i.e., any student being tutored must work it. Tutors of preaching beginners must not only assign it bibliographically, but discover its true value in small seminars among wide-awake students for a whole semester. Farris knows the homiletical best and he endorses it. He has seen and heard the worst and he abjures it. He has learned from effective preachers himself and he seeks to pass it on. In the contemporary vein this means, "Go for it!"

Donald Macleod
Princeton Theological Seminary

Warren, Michael. *Seeing Through the Media: A Religious View of Communications and Cultural Analysis*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997. Pp. 205. \$17.00.

Michael Warren is a professor for religious education and catechetical ministry in the department of theology at St. John's University. In his role as educator, he has worked extensively with young people and has observed the ever-increasing role played by mass media in their lives. This book is an attempt to analyze the influence popular culture and the media have on one's formation of self image and worldview, and to offer suggestions for the way in which the church can be involved in that formation.

He begins with a discussion of the problem of popular culture. Electronic communications and the accessibility of information has forever changed the way our environment is shaped. We are constantly bombarded with images that tell us who we are and how the world is defined. Mass media functions both to form and reflect our culture.

As Warren sees it, culture can be defined as a system that produces meaning for those living within it. Since the social world is a human construction, what we experience as culture can be attributed to someone or something. Once we start to ask who or what is controlling what we experience, we move towards cultural agency. We begin "to exercise some judgment and control over the kinds of cultural material [we] will accept and the kinds that must be resisted."

Warren examines in depth how images function within a cultural system, noting that, as a result of living in an image-laden society, heroes these days are celebrated more for their image than for any substantial deeds. Not all images function in a negative way, but none are value neutral. Those images that function metaphorically, that construct "reality" for us, need to be examined carefully with questions about whose reality is being presented.

Religion, as it aids people in deciphering the world, also functions as a culture. The church offers a way of interpreting life that often counters (and Warren believes should counter) the way that is offered by the media. In this way, two cultures compete for our allegiance. By fostering cultural agency, and the ability to view popular culture with a critical eye, the church can assist people in making decisions about their consumption of media. This involves everything from examining the latent agenda behind the marketing of children's toys, to criticizing the messages implicit in the stories told in cinema, television, and advertising. It is the church's responsibility, Warren claims, to help each person realize his or her call "to be a co-producer of the world of meaning and not merely a consumer."

Though Warren gives great attention to the effect of images on teenagers who are forming their self-identity, most of his discussion is applicable to a wider population. His material is somewhat theoretical, but at the end of two of the chapters he offers very practical questions designed to encourage cultural analysis.

His title has a double meaning. On the one hand, one sees the world these days through the media, and experiences life through the media's lens. On the other hand, the title suggests the possibility of seeing through the superficiality of the world that the media presents, and claiming the right to play an active part in the formation of one's own worldview. *Seeing Through the Media* makes a compelling case for the danger of absorbing popular culture uncritically and for the role that the church can play in countering that temptation.

Carolyn Herring
Southern Methodist University

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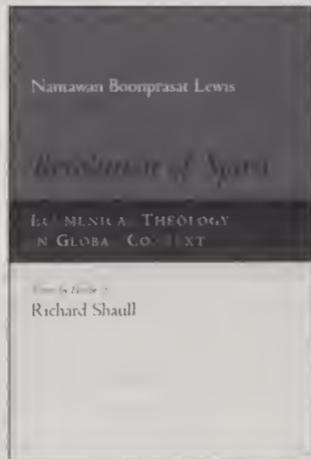
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ISBN 0-8028-4591-6 • 313 pages • paperback • \$30.00

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